

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

DIALOGUE

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Life:
A chemical dilemma?

Listening to sadness

How reliable
is the Bible?

Data and
interpretation:
Knowing the difference

My escape from the
world of the occult



Volume 13
Number

3

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September 11, 2001 and three other days

September 11, 2001. “A day that changed the world,” screamed headlines around the globe. So it was. So it will be when history turns the blood of that day into a chronicle of evil. Never again would we be the same. When that which was good—a creation of the finest of human intelligence—was used to plow down the twin towers of New York City, turning out of steel and glass an inferno for thousands of innocent men and women, and shaping an image of fear, and uncertainty around the world, evil in its distilled form wrote across the skies the prophetic message thundered centuries ago: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9, KJV).

To know it, we must go back to another day that changed the world. Infinitely worse in depth and scope, it was the day that brought the cosmic conflict between good and evil into this infant earth. Knowing what happened that day provides the Christian a deeper understanding of the nature of evil in times such as this when terror leaves us numb, stripping our innocence and challenging our compassion.

That day changed the perfect home of our first parents. Eden was not only the most beautiful place in all creation; it was also a towering symbol of God’s love where the Creator communed with His creatures on a face-to-face basis. But evil, total and focused, took the guile of a serpent, winged its way into the perfection of God’s creation, and crashed into the innocence of Adam and Eve. It snapped the direct link the Creator had with the humans, and hijacked the world into a diabolic course of sheer wickedness, manifest in a thousand ways through the corridors of history. Chaos, murder, hatred, divisions between humans, personal and corporate suffering have become the lot of the sojourners of this world.

The cry from Eden is a simple message: God is not responsible for evil in this world. He loves the lonely, wipes the tears, cares for the widow and the orphan, comforts the bereaved, shares the grief. Who, then, is responsible for this public terror and the private agony? Jesus gave us a brief answer: “‘An enemy has done this’” (Matthew 13:28, RSV). The enemy who is engaged in a mortal combat with all that is good and righteous, the enemy that hijacked this earth in the Garden of Eden, the enemy that is still at work, casting doubt on the goodness and love of God. The enemy that sought to destroy the Son of God on Golgotha’s cross.

And that was the second great day that changed the world. Satan sought to plow down the Son of God. The tower of the cross was to link heaven and earth, and Satan thought he had succeeded in his mission, when the Son cried out “‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” (Matthew 27:46, NIV). But God did not forsake. The answer to Satan’s terror and defilement came on Easter day when the Son arose in triumph over death and sin, and could offer to all redemption and reconciliation.

Yet a third day is soon to come—the day that will once for all eradicate from the universe all trace of evil. The answer to evil over the skies of New York and evil in the human heart and human habitation will soon come when Jesus shall descend from the skies, and the mighty voice of God will say, “‘It is done!’” (Revelation 21:6, RSV). Done with tears. Done with terror. Done with evil. Done with death.

To that day of hope we must cling on to, even as we traverse in these days of hopelessness. Seize that hope, share that hope, and live that hope. Maranatha!

—John M. Fowler, *Editor*

A unique feature

I have been acquainted with *Dialogue* since I was a first-year student at a public college. We received the journal as members of the local AMiCUS club and were encouraged to learn that other Adventist students were also faithful to honor the seventh-day Sabbath by not taking classes or examinations on that day. Our club was very active in the local churches, participating in youth programs, visiting patients in the hospital, and singing for members of the university faculty in their homes. Now, as a registered nurse at an Adventist hospital, I continue reading the journal. A unique feature of *Dialogue* is the possibility of exchanging communication with the authors of the essays and the individuals interviewed. I congratulate you for such a brilliant idea.

Marqueza Bulahan

Mindanao Sanitarium &
Hospital
Iligan City, PHILIPPINES

The 10-40 Window challenge

The challenge of reaching the millions of people living in the 10-40 Window (12:2) made a deep impression on me. I was not aware that 40 percent of the world’s population has not heard the good news of Jesus Christ and His salvation. The article has helped me to pray more intelligently for initiatives designed to bring the gospel to those large areas of the world.

Ileana Cobas

Havana, CUBA

Arguments and encouragement

I enjoyed reading *Dialogue* while studying theology at an Adventist college. However, I lost contact with the journal after beginning my law studies at Universidade Federal da Paraiba. Together with other Adventist university

Letters

students, I face the daily challenge of ideologies and philosophies that are contrary to our biblical convictions. We need to have access to the intellectual arguments for our faith and to the spiritual encouragement that *Dialogue* provides. How can we get the journal?

Gianne Gomes Ferreira
Pernambuco, BRAZIL

The editors respond:

We are pleased to send a copy of *Dialogue* to keep you connected to our journal. To receive future issues, you should contact the youth ministries or the education director of your union, who are responsible for the free distribution of *Dialogue among Adventist students attending public universities in their territory*. A second option is to write to our regional representatives, listed on page 2, who will tell you how to begin receiving the journal again. If those contacts fail to bring results, you may subscribe to *Dialogue* using the coupon found in each issue. May God bless you in your studies and strengthen your trust in Him.

Enriched intellectually and spiritually

As the only Adventist student in my school, at times I find myself struggling with feelings of loneliness. However, *Dialogue* is a welcome friend that keeps me in touch with many thoughtful Adventists in other parts of the world. Each is-

sue of the journal enriches me intellectually and spiritually. Thank you!

Andrea de Stael Ladislas
Vaureal, FRANCE

Russian stamp portrays Adventist church

Readers who enjoyed the article on stamps featuring Adventist subjects in *Dialogue* 13:2 will be interested to know that in July 2001 the Russian Postal Service issued a stamp portraying the Seventh-day Adventist church building in Ryazan, Russia. The Adventist stamp is part of a 14-stamp series depicting places of worship of several recognized religions in Russia. In addition to the Christian churches depicted (Armenian Orthodox, Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran, Pentecostal, Russian Orthodox, and Seventh-day Adventist), the series include religious buildings representing the Buddhist, Jewish, and Muslim faiths.

The Russian Postal Service issued 340,000 copies of the series, with a value of 2.50 rubles (approximately US\$0.11 cents) per stamp.

The initiative for producing the series came from the office of religious affairs of President V. V. Putin, to coincide with a program of religious activities held during the summer of 2001 in Moscow's Russian Exhibition Center.

The Ryazan church was built under the sponsorship of the Adventist televi-



sion program *Faith for Today* and it was completed in 1996. Its attractive design is typical of Protestant churches in Russia. Much of the labor was done by local Russian Adventists and volunteers from abroad. The design above the church building depicts the cross, the three angels of Revelation 14, and the Adventist logo.

This is the first time in Russian history that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been featured on a stamp. It recognizes the constructive role that our members play in society through agriculture, communication, education, health, publishing, and religious programs.

Valerie Ivanov

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Pontius' Puddle



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Write to us!

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Life: A chemical dilemma?

by Clifford Goldstein

Why scientific materialism is inadequate as a worldview.

A leafless tree, a country road, and two homeless men vying for existence. It's night, and everything's shrouded in the bottom of the earth's shadow. That's all it takes, the bottom of the shadow—and the world goes half dark.

Vladimir and Estragon wait for a mysterious figure whose promise to come prods them toward life.

"His name is Godot?" asks Estragon. "I think so," answers Vladimir.

As Vladimir and Estragon stand, suckled by the dehydrated hope that Godot will come, a procession of human suffering stomps past them. Bored, not so much by all the pain but by life's uselessness, they seek diversion in doing good, such as lifting a blind man who has stumbled to the ground.

"Come, let us get to work!" says Vladimir. "In an instant all will vanish and we'll be alone once more, in the midst of nothingness!" But as Vladimir reaches, he falls and can't get up. Despite more promises that Godot will come, they lean toward death again—this time planning to hang themselves. But having no rope, Estragon takes off the cord that holds up his pants, which collapse around his ankles. Testing the cord's strength, they pull; it breaks and both men almost fall. They decide to find a better rope, and try again...later.

"We'll hang ourselves tomorrow," says Vladimir. "Unless Godot comes."

"And if he comes?" asks Estragon.

"We'll be saved."

Godot never comes—which means they're never saved. Of course, they were never meant to be—which is why, from its first performance at Paris'

Théâtre de Babylone in 1953, Samuel Beckett's drama *Waiting for Godot*¹ always ends with these two atrophied souls stranded in an existence they hate but can't escape. Nor are they even sure they should try because they had the promise that Godot will come. That Godot never does hardly matters; what matters is the promise that he will.

Beckett's drama is the most cruel anti-Christian polemic since Voltaire's acid invectives in the 18th century. It's hard to imagine any serious Christians who believe in the Second Coming not seeing themselves caricatured, to some degree, in Vladimir and Estragon's pathetic attempt to balance their fears and doubts about human suffering with a loving and all-powerful God who has promised to come, to make it all right—but hasn't.

Beckett's tragicomedy in two acts, however, didn't mock just the promise, but life without the promise, the promise of something beyond the earth. What's worse? A false hope, or no hope at all?

However unkind to the Second Coming, *Waiting for Godot* was worse to the secularist; it ruthlessly brutalized life that exists only to keep itself alive. As the drama mimicked and mimed the obtuse mimicry of life lived without final purpose, Beckett asks the question that has dominated the post-Christian world: "How does one live a life that has no meaning?"

Life is too complicated, too full of traps and unexpected tricks to be lived, in and of itself. When people have no clue as to the purpose of their existence, when they can frame only diluted hy-

potheses about their origins, when all they can do is speculate on what death brings—then it's a wonder that humans can live at all.

The predicament

"We can neither," wrote Francisco Jose Moreno, "rid ourselves of the certainty of death nor achieve an understanding of life."² How incredible that something so basic, so fundamental as life can't even justify, much less explain, its own existence. We just, one day, are born; eventually we become aware of ourselves—pain, fear, hunger often being our first sensations of self-consciousness.

We're given something none of us sought after, planned for, or acquiesced in; we're not sure what it is, what it means, or even why we have it; its most real and immediate givens—pain, sorrow, loss, fear—remain absurdly inexplicable. Nevertheless, we cling to it even though we lose it anyway.

Is this all there is to human life?

Waiting for Godot divided reality into two spheres. The first one is mechanistic, atheistic, and secular. Here truths exist only as mathematical equations; they are amoral. The second is spiritual. It transcends a single-tiered reality and proclaims that truth doesn't originate in creation but in the Creator. In the first, human is the means, the ends, and all in all. In the second, God is. In the first, humanity is the subject of truth, in the second it's the object—and a vast gulf exists between the two.

If the mechanistic option is true, then our responses in the long run don't really matter; the end's the same for all of us, regardless of who we are or what we think, believe, or do. If the second is true, our responses have eternal consequences. If the first is true, we'll never know; in the second, we have hope of absolutes.

Between these two centers of gravity, a black fog looms. The option of a compromise, of a balance between them at

"the end of history" doesn't (ultimately) and can't (logically) exist. It's either one or the other, but not both. Neither view's philosophic architecture is so tightly woven, so perfectly packaged that even their most faithful adherents can't trip over the loose ends. No matter how tightly fused one may be to his or her beliefs, they are still *only* beliefs—subjective encounters with phenomena, mere opinions always tainted by what was woven in the genes at conception or by what's frothing in the belly at the particular moment of thought. Belief, ultimately, has no bearing upon the truth or the falsity of its object. No matter how fervent, belief can't make the false true or the true false. What's false never existed, even when we passionately believe that it did; what's true, in contrast, remains even after we long since stopped believing in it.

Where are we?

With his five unenviable characters on a barren stage, Samuel Beckett dramatized the West's most immediate dilemma: God is dead, so where does that leave those made in His image? For Beckett, they're left between two hard fetters: one, Christ hasn't come as He promised; two, we are in a sad lot because He hasn't. Between these cruel fates, humanity is manacled in a bond that offers no escape. How could it, when the knot itself is made of all reality, when it's woven of the only options possible, and when it's tied together by irreducible logic?

"Nothing to be done," mutters Estragon because there's nothing *to do*. Frankly, nothing *can* be done—not in a godless universe where our most inflexible and uncompromising enemy accepts no surrender and takes no prisoners but snipes and shells until every cell wall crumbles and all within drains out and decays. Death is a foe impossible for us to hunt out and destroy because it's made of what we are. In a naturalistic, single-tiered universe, life and death are

but different mixes of the same stew. The living are just a pubescent version of the dead.

The pre-Socratic Protagoras said, "Concerning the gods, whether they exist or not I do not know because of the difficulty of the topic and the shortness of human life."³ From then, through the materialistic presuppositions of modern science, a naturalistic worldview has had a long (in terms of time) but thin (in terms of adherents) history. But only in the past 100 years or so has secularism tilted the whole edifice of Western thought, with scientific and intellectual leaders preaching it with the fervor of crusaders. Conceived in the debris of the 17th century Cromwellian Revolution, birthed in arable Enlightenment ideals, nurtured by the goddess of reason and unwittingly encouraged by so-called intellectual and open-minded Christians, secularism came of age in the 20th century. Now it's so infused into Western culture we'd have to climb out of our eyes in order to see what it has done to our minds. Never before has there been such a widespread, institutionalized, and intellectually fertile movement to explain creation, and all its predicates (life, death, morals, law, purpose, love)—without a Creator.

After all, why bother with the texts of the dead when there's the science of the living? What can Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Paul possibly say to those raised on Newton, Einstein, and Heisenberg? Didn't the *Principia* vitiate the Apocalypse? Who needs the Lord moving over the "face of the deep" (Genesis 1:2) when Darwin did the same on the *H.M.S. Beagle*?

Wrapped in airtight numbers, expressed by scientists, and explained by well-woven theories, the secular worldview has commanded an aura of objectivity, of validation that's (at least for now) beyond the reach of religious faith. Special relativity has enjoyed proofs that the death and resurrection of Christ haven't.

Despite the apparent triumph of scientific rationalism, its victory has never been tethered to anything except itself and its own dogmatic presuppositions. The fit, in fact, is not as tight as has been taught, and the longer it shrouds the world, the more threadbare the cover becomes until reality is bursting through the seams. Sure, the world flashes across our senses as material; sure, rational thinking solves puzzles and helps jets fly; sure, science has dissected the atom and constructed the space shuttle. Yet these facts don't prove that materialism, rationalism, and science contain the potential, or even the tools, to explain all reality any more than classical physics alone explains France's 1998 World Cup victory.

Equations inadequately define a reality riotous with passion, effusive with thought, and spry with creativity. What algorithm can explain the passion of *Hamlet*, what formula the cooing of a dove, what law the foreboding of Van Gogh's *Wheatfield With Crows*? Are the symphonies of Beethoven and the lyrics of Shelley nothing more than the manuscripts upon which they are written? Theories and formulas, principles and laws don't make stars shine, robins fly, or mothers feed their young any more than carving the symbols $E=MC^2$ on a piece of refined uranium will make an atomic explosion.

Squandering away the essential

However great the scientific achievements of the past few hundred years, something essential and intrinsically human has been squandered along the way. Isaac Newton declared, "O God! I think thy thoughts after thee!" And Stephen Hawking, occupying the same chair at Cambridge as did Newton, says, "The human race is just a chemical scum on a moderate-sized planet, orbiting around a very average star in the outer suburb of one among hundreds of billion of galaxies."⁴ Between the two, there is a whole dimension, unable to fit

in test tubes or conform to formulas. Heaven, instead of being the throne of the cosmos, has been shattered, the pieces parceled out and fragmented into nothing but fickle myths scattered in the human imagination. And the God who once reigned in that heaven, now, instead, has disappeared, twice removed from that throne (created by the creatures He had once created).

Thus the divine has been contorted and demoted in order to fit the frame that for the past hundred years has outlined the boundaries of all reality. In addition, whole aspects of human existence have been painfully crammed by scientific rationalism into containers that can no more hold them than a fishnet can restrain whirlpools. Ethics and love, hate and hope transcend not just the Periodic Table of Elements but all 112 other facets of reality the Table represents. Scientific formula—no matter how finely tuned and balanced—can't fully explain heroism, art, fear, generosity, altruism, hate, hope, and passion.

A worldview that limits its world, and its view, only to rationalism, materialism, and scientific atheism misses all that's beyond them—which is so much of us, of what we are, of what we hope for, of what we aspire to, of love and worship, of life and death. Chemical scum doesn't mull over loftier worlds, envision eternity, write *Les Misérables*, or evoke the sublime. Formulas and chemicals are part of life, of course. But are they all of it? Never. To think that they are is to surrender oneself to the lowest possible denominator, to settle for the cheapest option when others, more hopeful, rich, and promising exist.

Moral responsibility

In fact, in a purely materialistic, chemical, and mechanical world, how can humans ever be responsible for their actions? If physical laws alone control us, we're like the wind or combustion. Any society based on purely materialistic premises would have to let its murder-

ers, child-molesters, thieves, rapists—in fact, all offenders—go free because we're machines, and who can ascribe moral culpability to a gizmo? It would be like putting an AK-47 on trial for murder. No society, even those glossed with secularism, allows for such moral inculpability, except among the criminally insane. Thus, what society says, implicitly at least, is that if scientific materialism were true, we'd all have to be lunatics. Every culture rejects hard-core materialism, believing instead that we're morally responsible beings not manipulated by deterministic physical forces beyond our control.

We're activated, obviously, by something more than what we immediately perceive—even if we don't know what—but only that it's there and real, and without it we're not alive, or free, or human. Immanuel Kant argued that the mere act of reason itself surpasses nature, transcends emotions, trumps urges, and upstages instincts. How could we even think transcendent thoughts if there were not something about us beyond nature, something greater than the sum of our chemicals, something more to our minds than pulsating meat? Isn't there some principle out there stating that effects can't be greater than their causes?

What science cannot tell us, said philosopher Bertrand Russell, mankind cannot know. Really? Then we can't know love, hate, mercy, good, evil, happiness, transcendence or faith. But because *we do* know them, a worldview like scientific materialism, which says *we can't* is obviously inadequate.

The incomplete vision

"An uneasy sense nonetheless prevails," wrote mathematician David Berlinski, "—it has *long* prevailed—that the vision of a purely physical or material universe is somehow incomplete; it cannot encompass the familiar but inescapable facts of ordinary life."⁵

Science and materialism can't even

justify themselves, or their own existence, much less explain everything else's. Austrian mathematician Kurt Gödel showed that no system of thought, even scientific, can be legitimized by anything within the system itself. You have to step outside the system to view it from a different and broader perspective in order to appraise it. Otherwise, how does one judge x , when x itself is the very criterion used to do the judging? How can humans objectively study the act of thinking, when they have only the act of thinking to do it?

For years reason has reigned as epistemological king of the West, the sole criteria for judging truth. Yet what has been the criteria for judging reason? Reason itself! But to judge reason by reason is like defining a word by using the word itself in the definition. It's a tau-

tology, and tautologies prove nothing. How fascinating, then, that reason itself—the foundation of thought, particularly, of modern thought—can't really be validated any more than the statement, "The house is red because the house is red."

The problem for scientism and materialism is, How can one step outside a system, into a wider frame of reference, when the system itself purports to encompass all reality? What happens when we reach the edge of the universe? What's beyond it? If there were a wider frame of reference to judge it from (God perhaps?), then the system itself would not be all-encompassing, as scientific materialism often claims to be.

"In short," wrote scientist Timothy Ferris, "there is not and will never be a complete and comprehensive scientific account of the universe that can be proved valid."⁶ In other words, even science and materialism will always have to be taken on...faith?

What? The inherent limits of science itself require *faith*? But isn't faith, the notion of belief in something unprovable, outside the purview of science, whose whole purpose is to prove things empirically? Isn't the concept of faith a leftover from a distant, mythic pre-rationalistic, pre-scientific age?

Because it is based on materialism, science implies (at least hypothetically) that everything should be accessible to experiment and empirical validation. Ideally, there shouldn't be room for faith in a scientific universe, *yet the very nature of that universe demands it*. What a paradox! Within the materialistic and scientific worldview, then, there reigns the potential for something beyond it, something outside of it, something that explains why love is more than endocrine function, why ethics is more than chemical synthesis, and why beauty is more than mathematical proportions... something, perhaps, divine?

Clifford Goldstein, a prolific author, is

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Attention, Adventist Professionals

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Listening to sadness

by Siroj Sorajjakool

Rethinking chronic depression

in the light of God's grace

Within herself, Nina feels cheated. She cannot quite figure out who she is, and why she is. The world outside seems dark, lonely, and oppressive. She writes of herself: "When you are in it there is no more empathy, no intellect, no imagination, no compassion, no humanity, no hope. It isn't possible to roll over in bed because the capacity to plan and execute the required steps is too difficult to master, and the physical skills needed are too hard to complete.... Depression steals away whoever you were, prevents you from seeing who you might someday be, and replaces your life with a black hole."¹

For every Nina, there are hundreds more lost in the world of depression.

Depression can be devastating. I know it. I have been there.

Too often we rush to quickly cure depression. We live in a quick-fix society of pills and surgical procedures with little tolerance for pain or desire to learn from it. But before we deal with depression, I want to underscore two factors.

First, we must make a clear distinction between chronic depression and situational depression. The former is a natural tendency to feel negative; the later is located in a particular situation—when the situation is resolved, depression disappears. This article deals with the first kind. Second, I do subscribe to the concurrent use of medications and other forms of therapy. I am also in favor of using spiritual tools to address feelings of negativity.

Depression: the facts

One out of four individuals in the

United States is likely to experience at least one episode of depression in his or her lifetime. Out of this group, only a quarter will receive appropriate diagnosis, and of these, only a quarter will receive appropriate treatment. The risk of depression for people who were born in the past 30 years is 10 times higher than those who were born 70 years ago.²

The severity of this illness is reflected by its persistence. A study by psychologists Gayle Belsher and Charles Costello shows that approximately 50 percent of those treated will experience relapse within two years of successful treatment.³ Ian Gotlib and Constance Hammen state: "Only recently have we come to understand that for many sufferers of major depression the disorder is recurrent, if not chronic."⁴

Studies have also shown that treated clients, even though they improved, were still more depressed at the end of therapy than non-depressed control subjects. The functioning level of depressed persons who received treatment was within one standard deviation lower than that of the general population, while those who did not receive treatment were functioning at two standard deviations below norm.⁵ Even after treatment, many continue to experience symptoms of depression in a less-intense form. For them, the struggle will be continuous. This has significant implications for the development of spirituality because it promotes positive feelings as opposed to negativity that destroys meaning. Since meaning-making is the function of theology, meaninglessness runs against its very core.

Depression: the problem

One of the most damaging features of chronic depression is that individuals become trapped in a cycle of negativity. Karp writes, "Depression is a unique case since the most critical assaults on self come from within. . . . In the midst of an episode of depression individuals feel a self-hatred far greater than could possibly be expressed by others toward them."⁶ These "critical assaults on self" emerge concurrently with the desire to correct oneself. This process begins with setting goals and striving toward them. What depressed individuals are not aware of is that negativity negates.⁷ They try to correct themselves while blaming themselves at the same time. The more they strive, the farther they are from where they want to be. They are trapped within the cycle of depression.

In my experience at a counseling center and in a psychiatric facility, and of working with church members, I have observed this common cycle among depressed individuals. They try and try and get really tired of fighting. It is a cycle from which they don't seem to be able to escape. They're really sick of themselves, and don't want to fight any more. Depressed individuals are fighting something illogical where rationality has no control over emotion. "When the thought is triggered and the emotion stirred, the cycle spirals downward. People who are in this state often say, 'I know it is illogical, but I just can't stop it.' They are caught in a cycle that does not seem to end. The trying keeps on even when the body experiences extreme fatigue. The deep wish is often expressed as 'Please stop this spin and let me rest for a while.' Yet one cannot help but keep on trying in an ocean of irrationality, wishing that perhaps just one more effort may lead to liberation from the vicious cycle. But the wish becomes a deeper pain. The yoke gets heavier. The downward spiral hits a new momentum."⁸

The mechanism of negativity

What causes this cycle of self-blame and despair? In the late 1970s, Tom Pyszczynski and Jeff Greenberg in their research noticed a relationship between depression and self-awareness. This observation resulted in numerous studies and experiments. They found that depressed individuals are highly self-focused, with a tendency to be self-absorbed. They are usually more self-focused after failure than after success. Pyszczynski and Greenberg asked: Why are these individuals so highly self-focused, and why do they focus more on themselves after failure than after success? They write: "Essentially, we view depression as the consequence of perseverated efforts to regain a lost object when it is impossible to do so. This perseveration is believed to occur when an individual has lost a primary basis of self-worth and does not have sufficient alternative sources from which to derive self-worth. The resulting self-regulatory perseveration is posited to entail a chronically high level of self-focus which produces a spiral of escalating negative affect, self-blame and disparagement, and motivational deficits that ultimately result in a negative self-image and depressive self-focusing style which perpetuate the depressed state."⁹

A similar research by Paula Ray Pitromonaco revealed that the self-structure of people with depression tends to be less conceptually complex and is organized more around affect and less in terms of other aspects of the self.¹⁰ This is significant because the self-structure that organizes itself around negative affect while disregarding other aspects of the self will only lead to greater intensification of the negative experience. "Depressive self-schema intensifies one's negative affect, which, in turn, draws attention onto the self. Increased self-awareness leads to self-evaluation and motivates one to try to reduce the discrepancy. This is where negation takes place, and the cycle is perpetuated."¹¹

Every attempt at correcting oneself is accompanied by this depressive self-schema. One finds oneself focusing only on one's failures. The mind remembers only negatives while attributing positive outcomes to external factors. The wider the gap gets, the more one becomes conscious of failure to meet the goals. "The intensified negative affect, self-blame, self-evaluation, and disruption of successful, competent behavior in other domains pushes the recently destabilized self-concept toward negativity."¹² Intensified negative affect, in turn, leads to greater awareness of discrepancy, which leads to more trying, and so the cycle continues. The depressive self-schema negates every attempt to close the gap. The harder one tries, the worse one feels about oneself.

How can depressed individuals exit this cycle of self-criticism? I believe Christianity offers a tool for depressed individuals to use in coping with the negating power of depression.

Exiting the cycle: a theological reflection

Causes of depression may be varied. We may be born with a tendency toward depression or experience traumatic events that sink us into despair. However it develops, when individuals are exposed to prolonged stress and do not receive appropriate treatment, they face the increased likelihood of future depressive episodes.

Negative affect also causes a perception of unworthiness: "I'm not good enough. I'm undeserving." In social relations this may express itself in the idea of not belonging, of having to earn the right to belong. Depressed individuals, therefore, tend to confuse self-consciousness, which is chemically based, with social relations and social acceptance.

In my struggle with depression, I found myself trying to run away from myself. The sense of discomfort plus the constant negative affect that filtered my

interpretation and assessment of the world around me enticed me to abandon myself in the pursuit of another self that I thought would create a greater sense of comfort. The discomfort led me to try to be other than who I really was. This turned into a complex spiritual quest, leading to a sense of spiritual distress.

I learned that the dark side of me followed me like a shadow. The only way to hide from it was to be in the dark. Depressed individuals keep moving toward the "ought," not realizing that the mechanism of negativity keeps pushing them farther behind. "The harder the struggle, the tighter the grip." Depression is a symptom of a depleted self. To "run away from" is to further deplete the self. This is often the case with individuals with chronic depression.

This "running away from" is theologically unsound. Instead, the depressed should run to the cross of Christ. There is no better resting place than at the foot of the cross. The cross is an invitation to come as we are. Striving for the "ought" tempts us to minimize the power of the cross to embrace us. It suggests that the redemptive event is not complete, and we need to help God save us. The Bible is clear on this point, however. We cannot run away from ourselves. Through the cross God says to depressed individuals, "Stay—stay right here. You do not have to go anywhere else. I am coming to you." Our resting place is not found in attempting to be what we think we ought to be. Grace is where we find rest, and grace comes to us.

To exit the cycle of depression we need to learn to be present in it, remain there, and learn to sit in the dark despair and listen. God has given each of us an inner healing process that utilizes pain as a natural part of human development. This healing is not necessarily "curing depression" or "getting rid of the depressive symptoms," but a call to

rest and let this inner driving force toward wholeness do its work. As we listen, our understanding of who we are will deepen and this will enhance the process of self-differentiation. In this world where we struggle and fight, God's grace invites us to listen so we may find a resting place.

Finally, two practical suggestions. First, if you are struggling with negativity on a day-to-day basis, *don't try to fix it*. Depressed individuals want to fix depression. By not fighting so hard, you can reduce its power to control your life.

Second, *remain in God's presence*. Depressed individuals need to learn to see themselves as they really are, not through the negative lens of depression. We are invited to rest in God. We may not always feel good, but we can always be at home there. It is important to learn that we can remain in the presence of God even in the midst of negative feelings and thoughts.

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How reliable is the Bible?

by Alberto R. Timm

Human theories may come and go, but “the word of our God shall stand for ever.”

Christianity derives its authority from the Word of God. Christ and His apostles regarded the Scriptures as a revelation of God, with an undergirding unity among its various teachings (see Matthew 5:17-20; Luke 24:27, 44, 45-48; John 5:39). Many church fathers and the great Protestant reformers of the 16th century upheld the unity and reliability of the Scriptures.

However, under the strong influence of historical criticism of the 18th century Enlightenment, a considerable number of theologians and Christians consider that the Bible is a mere product of ancient cultures in which it was conceived. Consequently, the Bible is no longer seen as consistent and harmonious in its various teachings, but rather as a collection from different sources with internal contradictions. An additional blow to the authority and the unity of the Scripture came in the second half of the 20th century through the onslaught of postmodernism. The new trend is to emphasize not the actual meaning of Scripture, but the various meanings attributed to it by its readers.

Seventh-day Adventists, by contrast, have continued to emphasize the unity, authority, and reliability of the Scriptures. In order to maintain such a conviction, however, one has to find honest answers to the following four questions: Upon what basis can we speak of agreement within the Scriptures? How do we deal with some major problem areas in which that agreement is not always evident? How did the miracle of inspiration safeguard the unity of the Word of God? And, finally, what is the role of the Holy Spirit in helping us recognize that unity?

Internal agreement in the Scriptures

In this area, we need to address at least two foundational issues. First, the relationship between the Word of God and the contemporary cultures in which that Word was originally delivered. In the Scriptures one can easily perceive a constant dialogue between universal principles and specific applications of those principles within a particular cultural setting. Such a perception cannot be considered as cultural conditionings that distort the underlying unity of the Word of God, but precisely the opposite: universal principles that transcend any specific culture.

For example, the Bible shows several instances in which God *tolerated* some kind of human departure from His original plans, as in the cases of polygamy (see Genesis 16:1-15; 29:15-30:24; etc.) and divorce (see Matthew 19:3-12; Mark 10:2-12). There are other cases in which early Christians were counseled to *respect* some specific cultural elements, as in regard to women wearing a veil while praying or prophesying (1 Corinthians 11:2-16), and remaining silent in the church (1 Corinthians 14:34, 35). But the overall tenor of the Scriptures is that its religion is to transcend and transform its environment.

G. Ernest Wright explains that “the Old Testament bears eloquent witness to the fact that Canaanite religion was the most dangerous and disintegrative factor which the faith of Israel had to face” (see Deuteronomy 7:1-6).¹ Floyd V. Filson adds that, in the first century A.D., the Jews and later the Judaizers “sensed the fact that the Gospel was a different

thing from the religious messages which they had known" and that "it was breaking the limits of current Judaism" (see Matthew 5:20).²

The second issue that has to be addressed by those interested in understanding the unity of the Scriptures is the methodological perspective from which one looks into the Scriptures. From the self-testimony of the Scriptures, one can see that the Bible is much closer to the Eastern world, with a more systemic and integrative view of reality, than to the Western, with a more analytical and compartmentalized perspective. This is an important hint to be taken into consideration in the process of defining our methodological approach to the Scriptures.

If one starts looking *inductively* for discrepancies within the Scriptures, one will end up "finding differences rather than agreement and unity." But, on the other hand, if one starts looking *deductively*, one might end up discovering an underlying unity binding together various parts of the Scripture.³ Many apparent inconsistencies might be harmonized by moving from the broad thematic frameworks of the Scriptures into their smaller details, rather than by starting with those details without understanding the basic frameworks to which they belong.

Problem areas

There are, however, some major areas of alleged internal "inconsistencies" of the Bible that people often use to undermine the concept of biblical unity. Consider briefly five such areas and see how these problems might be solved.

Tensions between the Old and the New Testaments. Some people speak of several dichotomous tensions between the Old and the New Testaments by referring to such topics as God's justice versus His love, and obedience to the law versus salvation by grace. Those tensions can be solved if we recognize clearly the typological relationship between both Testaments, and if we acknowledge

that justice and love, and law and grace are concepts developed throughout both Testaments.

Imprecatory Psalms. Some see the imprecatory psalms, with their prayers of vengeance and curse for the wicked (see Psalms 35; 58; 69; 109; 137; etc.), as directly opposed to the lovely prayers of Christ and Stephen in favor of their enemies (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60). In trying to solve this problem, we should not forget that the New Testament quotes the imprecatory psalms as inspired and authoritative, and that in the Old Testament the enemies of God's covenant people were considered as enemies of God Himself. It seems, therefore, quite evident that those psalms have to be understood within the theological framework of theocracy of the Old Testament.

Synoptic problem. Probably no other area has posed so much controversy with regard to the unity of God's Word than the so-called synoptic problem. We will never be able to fully explain how the first three Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) were written, what has really been their indebtedness to one another, and how to harmonize some minor discrepancies in parallel accounts. Robert K. McIver states in *The Four Faces of Jesus* that "there is no reason to suppose that the data brought out by a careful investigation of the synoptic problem provides any basis for doubting the basic historicity of the events reported by the Gospels. In fact, it probably does quite the opposite. Rather, it is evidence of their reliability."⁴

Paul and James on justification. Another problem area that has not always been clearly understood by some people is the classic tension between Paul's statement that "a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law" (Romans 3:28, NRSV) and James's words that "a person is justified by works and not by faith alone" (James 2:24, NRSV). But this tension can be solved if one keeps in mind that while Paul is responding to the *legalistic* use of

the "works of the law" as a means to be saved (Romans 3:20, RSV; cf. 3:31; 7:12), James is criticizing the *antinomian* profession of a "dead" faith as fruitless as the uncommitted faith of the demons (James 2:17, 19).

Factual errors. There are those who deny the underlying unity of the Word of God because it allegedly contains a large amount of so-called "factual errors." Many of those alleged "errors" are not actual errors but only misunderstandings of the real issues involved. An example of this is the way Edwin R. Thiele has demonstrated that many of the alleged gaps and discrepancies in biblical chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah could be well synchronized.⁵ At the same time, we have to realize that we cannot solve all the difficulties of the Scriptures.⁶

Despite the existence of some inaccuracies in minor details, sufficient evidence exists to show that those inaccuracies do not distort the basic concept conveyed by the text in which they appear, and they do not break the underlying unity of the Word of God.

Yet, some may ask: Why did God allow these problems to remain in the Scriptures? Could He not have straightened some of them out so that our understanding would be much easier? These are not easy questions to answer, but I believe there are some important reasons why God did not take care of these problem areas.

We have to realize that God has entrusted His message to human beings—"earthen vessels" (2 Corinthians 4:7, KJV)—and they in turn communicated it in their imperfect language. Besides this, the Word of God was intended to serve as a "light" for the path (Psalm 119:105) of all human beings of all ages and of all places. As the spiritual "bread" (Matthew 4:4) that testifies of "the living bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:51, KJV), the Bible had to speak to both rich and poor, learned and unlearned, in the context in which they lived.

If the Bible was a "monotonously uni-

form" book, people would read it once or twice and then put it aside as we do with old newspapers. But the Bible has a deep and "rich and colorful diversity of harmonious testimonies of rare and distinct beauty" that makes it so attractive.⁷ Although its basic message is perfectly understandable even for common people, the Bible has such a depth of thought that all those scholars and simple people who studied it throughout the ages have not been able to exhaust its meaning and solve all its difficulties.

The miracle of inspiration

But how did the miracle of inspiration safeguard the unity of the Word of God? Up to what extent can we expect agreement within the Scriptures? Should we assume, as some people do, that the Bible is trustworthy only in matters of salvation? Can we isolate the chronological, historical, and scientific portions of Scripture from its overall salvific purpose?

As I argued in another article, the Bible claims for itself that it is wholistic in nature, forming an indivisible unity (Matthew 4:4; Revelation 22:18, 19) and pointing to salvation as its objective (John 20:31; 1 Corinthians 10:11). Furthermore, Scripture portrays "salvation" as a broad historical reality, related to all other biblical themes. And it is precisely this overall thematic interrelationship that makes it almost impossible for someone to speak of the Bible in dichotomous terms as being reliable in some topics and not in others.

"Because the primary purpose of the Bible is to build up faith for salvation (John 20:31), its historical, biographical, and scientific sections often provide only the specific information needed to achieve this goal (John 20:30; 21:25). In spite of its selectiveness in some areas of human knowledge, it does not mean that the Scriptures are untrustworthy in those areas. 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God' (2 Timothy 3:16) and our understanding of inspiration should always uphold this wholistic, all-en-

compassing scope."⁸

Without subscribing to Calvinistic inerrancy, we have enough reasons to believe that the Bible is both infallible in its salvific purpose and trustworthy in its whole thematic interrelationship. According to T. H. Jemison, in the Scriptures "there is unity in its theme—Jesus Christ, His cross and His crown. There is complete harmony of teaching—the doctrines of the Old Testament and those of the New are the same. There is unity of development—a steady progression from the creation to the Fall and on to the redemption and the final restoration. There is unity in the co-ordination of the prophecies."⁹

Role of the Holy Spirit

The underlying unity of the Word of God was brought about by the direct role of the Holy Spirit in the production of the Scriptures. Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:16 (NRSV) that "all Scripture is inspired by God." Peter adds that "no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20, 21, NKJV).

Since it was the Holy Spirit who generated the unity of the Word of God, only He can enlighten our minds so that we might perceive the unity that undergirds the Bible. Christ promised His disciples that the Holy Spirit would come to guide them "into all the truth" (John 16:13, NRSV). Paul explains that "the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Corinthians 2:13, NKJV).

Conclusion

Today, unfortunately, many Christians have lost their confidence in the Scriptures, and are rereading it from the perspective of their own traditions (traditionalists), reason (rationalists), personal experience (existentialists), even modern culture (culturalists). Tired of the dryness of such human ideologies, many others are looking for a safer

ground on which to anchor their faith.

But if our anchor is grounded in the Word itself, believing its testimony that it is not a result of human invention, but a divine gift to humanity to reveal God and His redeeming love, we have nothing to fear or lose. The Holy Spirit who generated the origin, unity, and authority of the Word can also enlighten our minds to recognize it as such. Human theories may come and go (see Ephesians 4:14), but "the word of our God will stand forever" (Isaiah 40:8, NRSV).

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Data and interpretation: Knowing the difference

by Elaine Kennedy

Multiple, alternative

interpretations of data are not

only possible but probable.

Consider the following statements.
Statement 1: A is a human being. B is a gorilla. Between A and B are many similarities, but A has many superior attributes when compared with B.

Statement 2: The similarities show that both A and B had a common origin. The similarities suggest that A evolved from B over millions of years.

Statement 3: The similarities show that both A and B had a common origin: the creator God. The superior attributes of A show that God chose to create human beings in His own image, and this was not the case with the creation of animals.

Statement 1 is data—observable, knowable, and open to experience. Statements 2 and 3 are interpretations of the facts, one by an evolutionist and the other by a creationist.

This simple illustration reveals that knowledge or information can be divided into two separate concepts: data and interpretation. Since data is subject to alternative interpretations, students and researchers must carefully distinguish between the information that constitutes the collected data and the “information” derived from the data that is presented as evidence in support of a hypothesis. Scientists endeavor to be as objective as is possible in this regard, but several factors (biases) influence the selection and interpretation of the data.

The distinction between data and interpretation is no less important in the science classroom than it is in the science laboratory. The greatest difficulty with the process of separating data from interpretation lies within the context of

textbook assignments. Textbooks are the prime sources of information in any classroom; however, in the science classroom the information that is provided is often more interpretation than data. Students need early training with respect to identification of data in exercises using textbooks. The development of such exercises will require additional effort on the part of teachers, but should yield more analysis on the part of the students and less explanation on the part of the teacher as the class progresses.

Knowing the difference

What is data? What is the difference between data and interpretation? Data consist of measurements and observations used as a basis for reasoning, discussion, or calculation.¹ Observable data are usually regarded as unalterable facts, but may or may not be true. As technology and science progress, “facts” will be discarded, modified, or replaced with new data. For example, measurements may form a basis for identification, i.e., an interpretation, of an object or phenomenon. Fossils of extinct organisms are often identified, based on measurements of various structures on the body parts that have been preserved. The accuracy and precision of the measurements make correct identification difficult because with many of the extinct shelly fauna scientists do not know whether or not large organisms that have similar structure to small organisms represent different species, gender, or developmental stage. The actual identifications or calculations are not data; they are interpretations. Much of the controversy that exists in the sci-

tific literature is generated by a rather significant problem: interpretations drawn from limited databases. This point needs to be emphasized in every unit that is studied in any science classroom.

The complexity of data and interpretations

As an illustration of the complex interplay between data and interpretations, consider two steps involved in the process of merely identifying rocks and minerals.

Step 1. Interpretations of light properties of minerals. Light properties of minerals are described from the microscopic examination of a very thin slice of rock (commonly referred to as a “thin section”). Polarized light (light waves that vibrate in only one particular plane) is used to conduct a series of tests on the light properties of each mineral in the thin section. The tests provide a visual database of light-transmission patterns. Mineralogists use these patterns to determine the mineral composition of the sample. The identification of the minerals is an interpretation based on the light property data.

Step 2. Determination of rock type. By examining the contact of one mineral with another and measuring how much of each mineral is present, the rock type can be determined. A geologist who identifies the rock considers the mineral identifications “data” even though the rock identification is actually an interpretation of an interpretation. (The mineralogical “data” were determined originally from the light property data.) The point is that the scope of what constitutes data is actually quite narrow.

Just how valid is identification? Identifications can be made using comparisons with standards. For example, three thin sections may have the same mineral composition but the mineral contacts may be very different. If the mineral grains are interlocking, the rock is an *igneous rock*. If the mineral grains are al-

tered, distorted, elongated, and aligned, it is a *metamorphic rock*. The same minerals cemented together form *sedimentary rock*. When terms and procedures are well defined, identification is fairly easy and relatively reliable.

Since data is limited to what we can measure or directly observe, teachers need to foster their students’ ability to interpret the data so that they can develop reliable conclusions. An interpretation is an explanation, a means of presenting information in understandable terms. Interpretations are limited by the availability of data and by the bias of the observer.

Multiple levels of interpretation

Several levels of interpretations exist. For example, the name, *oolite*, not only identifies a particular rock type but also implies an entire history of environmental requirements and depositional conditions for its formation. How can a name acquire that much interpretative information?

1. A thin section made of round, beadlike particles all cemented together must first be identified with respect to its mineralization. Therefore, the first level of interpretation is to identify the mineral composition of the little beads. For the purposes of this illustration, we will identify them as particles of calcium carbonate.
2. The identification of the structure of the round, bead-filled rock is based on recognition of a central object that may be a piece of some other kind of rock or perhaps a bit of shell material around which the calcium carbonate has precipitated. This structural information coupled with the roundness of the particles identifies the beads as oolites. At this point, one might think that the exercise is finished and the identification is as simple and straightforward as the mineral identifications. However, a third

level of interpretation is introduced to explain how the oolites were formed.

3. The third level relies on observations in modern environments. Geologists know that oolites are typically formed near a shore by the agitation of warm, shallow, saline waters.
4. Researchers apply this knowledge to oolitic rocks found on a mountainside. In other words, geologists take what they know about the modern setting and interpret the ancient setting accordingly. They assume that the oolites on the mountain formed at that site sometime in the past in the same way that oolites form in the ocean or the Great Salt Lake in Utah. That interpretation implies that oolites do not form in any other way. The reasoning seems quite logical and the conclusion seems obvious; however, this association may not be true.

The exercise is not over. This set of interpretations is now added to other data with multiple interpretations to bring us to the final description of a particular rock exposure. This process is duplicated at other exposures or outcrops of rock over a broader region to develop a model.

5. Geologists use other rock types and additional data to develop models to describe geologic events in Earth’s history. For example, cemented quartz grains are called sandstones. Patterns in sandstone may be due to a process known as cross-bedding. Typically, cross-beds are formed as currents (wind and/or water) deposit sand and silt on the lee slope of dunes. By integrating a broad range of data and interpretations (the minerals, rocks, oolites, and cross-bedding) geologists can now develop that fifth level of interpretation: modeling. Models

provide scientists with a generalized framework for developing predictions and assessing events that may have occurred in the past.²

Thus the distinct difference between data and interpretation must be utilized when evaluating research. Data are actual measurements and observations. Interpretations try to identify or explain what is measured and observed. The validity of an interpretation is based on how well the interpretation accommodates the available data. Interpretations may change as the database changes. This interplay between data and interpretations is what make science so successful and progressive.

Bias during data acquisition

Scientists are aware that they are subject to error and misconception. Hence they try to maintain an attitude of objectivity in research.³ This commitment to objectivity has created a sort of aura around scientists and, unfortunately, science has developed a popular image of “infallibility.” People often prefer to believe that scientists are objective and deal with absolutes. Some even think that when a scientist draws a conclusion, all competing theories have been refuted and questions have been resolved. Thus a false sense of security in science develops. Some scientists do little to dispel this image. To complicate matters, the scientific community has adopted the position that any researcher having a religious bias is nonscientific; therefore, by definition, creation-science cannot be true science. Such an attitude fails to recognize its own bias.⁴

Here are some biases that influence science—some technical, some subtle and unconscious factors.

1. *Sampling constraints.* The first problem in gathering data is sampling bias. Every scientist has some preconceived ideas about the research that influences the selection of data. Random sampling helps minimize problems,⁵ but even then

Can you find the data?

The article below is typical of the science news published in newspapers around the world. It contains a lot of information but not all of it is scientific data. Circle or underline the data as you read through the “news” and then check your answers on page 18. What can you conclude from just the data?

Rich Fossil Deposit Found

The New York Times, March 27, 1984. (Reprinted by permission.)

What is believed to be the richest deposit of early Ice Age fossils ever found in North America has been partly uncovered in a quarry near Apollo Beach, Fla. It is expected that the deposit will ultimately yield as many as 60 species.

However, only after the deposit has been fully excavated, and the specimens assembled and prepared for study, will it be possible to assess the full significance of the find, researchers say.

Those fossils found to date range from Ice Age elephants (mammoth and mastodons) to long necked camels and what appears to be a new species of llama. There are bones from large birds resembling the California condor, the Andean vulture, and a big extinct turkey vulture.

Although the site is now near the edge of Tampa Bay, Dr. S. David Webb of the Florida State Museum in Gainesville suspects, from the typical habitat of such birds, that the animals were all living far inland. The sea may have been “pretty far out in the Gulf,” he said in a telephone interview on Monday.

Webb, a recognized authority on Ice

Age animals, said the specimens all seemed to be of the primitive types that lived from 1.5 million to 1.9 million years ago.

The find was made by Frank Garcia, an amateur paleontologist, regarded by Webb as “one of our best in Florida.” Last fall, Garcia found a few tantalizing specimens in the pit, from which seashells were being excavated for road surfacing. This encouraged him to dig deeper and, between two thick shell deposits, he found a highly concentrated bone deposit two feet thick.

The bones appear jumbled and disarticulated, rather than as intact skeletons lying where the animal died. Such deposits in Alaska have been attributed to water action that swept many animal remains into a single streambed. Webb believes the deposits should provide much information on faunal exchanges between North and South America soon after the Isthmus of Panama rose from the sea and provided a bridge between the continents.

Species found in the pit seem to display links to animals that evolved on both continents.

there are choices made that favor a particular hypothesis.

2. *Systematic errors.* A scientist may have a “blind spot”: a failure to recognize data. For example, it is common for a paleontologist who specializes in fossil snails to collect a wider variety of gastropods than

anyone else on the mountainside. However, that same individual will have fewer clams and corals than other fossil collectors. These other fossils can have a significant impact on the interpretation of that site, but the bias of the researcher eliminates that input.

Besides the problems involved with obtaining data, the processing of data can introduce systematic technical bias.⁶ An unrecognized faulty procedure or an incorrectly applied mathematical formula or statistical analysis in the processing of data introduces a systematic error or bias into the results.

3. *Technological constraints.* Scientists now have the ability to incorporate large quantities of data and interpretations into computer-generated models through analyses involving pattern recognition. However, gigantic databases do not necessarily mean that models adequately reflect complex systems and processes. The development of simplified models with computer-generated systems produces technological bias because the simplified parameters place limits on the application of the model to real systems.⁷
4. *Quality of data.* Analysis of data introduces bias due to the qualitative or subjective interpretations that are included. For example, in the analysis of potassium-argon data, the quantity of potassium and argon can be measured very accurately and precisely. However, it is difficult to know just what that data means, and the conclusions relative to age depend heavily on numerous assumptions and problems

that arise within the context of the methodology.⁸ Current technology does not measure the age of the rock directly, thus the conclusions are biased. Descriptive data are even more problematic.

5. *Financial constraints.* Scientific method requires rigorous testing before any theory can be accepted. However, time and monetary constraints limit the crucial testing process. New data are incorporated into current theory because it is easier to get material published if it is generally accepted by the scientific community. The funding process has an incredible influence on research today.⁹ No papers published, no money for research. It's that simple. The rigorous testing proposed by the scientific method is not cost-effective; so ideas and concepts are rushed into print and cited in subsequent publications. Monetary pressures are increasing the technical bias by limiting the experimental process. Students should be aware that research funding has significant control over published research.

Implications for science and religion

When it comes to the interface between science and religion, several points need to be noted. First, not all data are accurately measured, and sometimes it is difficult to differentiate between data and interpretation. Certainly, multiple, alternative interpretations of any database are not only possible but probable. Interpreting data can be very complex; however, the simplest scenario is usually preferred to the more complex one in the development of theories. Second, bias is present in any interpretation because all scientific interpretations are at least partly subjective. Third, we need to understand the nature of science and how scientists work. Peo-

ple sometimes get discouraged because scientific interpretations are changing constantly, so they don't know what to believe. However, that is the nature of science; that is how it advances. Once one truly grasps this aspect of science, one is reluctant to base theological beliefs on specific data or scientific concepts. Fourth, while science may be useful and provide relevant information, it should not dictate anyone's theology. If science is allowed to dictate theology, then every time scientific interpretations change, theology must be altered, whether that alteration is consistent with one's belief system and experiences or not. At the same time, theology should not dictate anyone's science. Concepts such as "fixity of species," based on personal theology held by many in the 17th and 18th centuries,¹⁰ and "flat earth" theory are some of the ideas that contributed to conflict between science and theology. The Bible can supply legitimate working hypotheses and constraints for science. In fact, Scripture as an information source suggests avenues of investigation that would not be considered by most non-Christian persons. Such research should acknowledge any scriptural bias that may be present and all the data must be fairly evaluated.

Conclusions

Scientists are fairly confident that they know what they are doing. However, especially in the area of origins, science alone cannot assess the complete database because the scientific approach does not consider the possibility of supernatural involvement in nature and in the history of our Earth. Most scientists believe there are irreconcilable conflicts between science and Scripture.¹¹ For example, Ayala states, "To claim that the statements of Genesis are scientific truth is to deny all the evidence."¹² The evidence does not prove either a long or short history for life. The evidence available provides very limited information.

Answers to page 17

The scientific data included in the news item are: (1) In a quarry near Apollo Beach, Florida, (2) disarticulated fossil bones were found, (3) some of which belonged to large birds. (4) The fossil bones were located between two shell deposits (5) that were two feet thick.

The data are not the primary problem in reconciling science and Scripture. It is the interpretation of the data that presents conflicts. It has also been said, "Not only is the present the key to the past, but the present is the key to the future."¹³ Both the historical accounts of a worldwide Flood and the prophetic accounts of Christ's second advent proclaim the falsity of that concept.¹⁴

For Christians, the Bible provides a source of information that suggests there is a better way to approach science. From this perspective, some harmony between science and Scripture may be recognized. In fact, Christians expect harmony because they recognize God as the Creator of nature and its scientific "laws."

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You may also consult the Institute's web site: www.grisda.org

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Gwendolyn Winston Foster

Dialogue with Philadelphia's Health and Fitness Czar

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, native Gwendolyn Winston Foster has been a health educator for most of her life. She considered becoming a physician like her brothers, but decided that she would rather prevent disease than treat it. While raising her three young children, she moved to Loma Linda, California, where she earned a Master of Science in Public Health degree from Loma Linda University. She continues to serve on its board.

When in 1978 the Allegheny East Conference of Seventh-day Adventists elected Foster to serve as its Health Ministries director, she set a precedent by becoming the only full-time person in that position in the North American Division. Always willing to innovate, she developed *Fitness for Life*, a lifestyle reconditioning program that eventually became the basis for an annual two-week live-in program on the conference campus in Pine Forge, Pennsylvania. People came from all over the United States to participate in "Fitness Camp," where she demonstrated dramatic results in helping people overcome chronic lifestyle diseases.

For five years Foster hosted a "Fitness for Life" call-in talk show that was broadcast on Philadelphia radio station WHAT. She also served as health editor of *Message*, an Adventist journal targeted to African-Americans. In addition, she developed a Lifestyle Certification program for lay people that was eventually adopted by the North American Division.

In February 2000, Mayor John Street of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, an Adventist and lifelong friend of Foster's, established the Office of Health and Fitness and appointed Foster the Health Czar. She oversees the health initiative "Fun, Fit & Free" that has transformed the city, which had formerly been dubbed the "Fattest City in the United States" by a national health magazine. People from all over the world have come to Philadelphia to see how Foster operates, and she has begun sharing her program model with other cities.

In addition to her passion for health, Foster loves music. She served for many years as music director for the Allegheny East Conference and has directed several outstanding choirs. Her production of Handel's *Messiah* at her church, Ebenezer Seventh-day Adventist in Philadelphia, is a favorite among music lovers on the Eastern seaboard.

■ How did your position, Health and Fitness Czar, come about?

In 1996, when John Street was president of the Philadelphia City Council, he said to me, "If I should run for mayor, I'd like you to do some health things in the city." I said, "Yeah, right," because I always saw myself retiring from the conference. He said, "Think about

it." I said to myself, "It will be three or four years before that happens," so I almost forgot about it. Of course, he mentioned it again when he got elected. The position, Health Czar, developed because at first we discussed working within the Department of Health, but we thought better of that because it's almost impossible to change their structure. What

they do is so entrenched in tradition and policy that we couldn't do anything exciting. As Health Czar, I'm accountable to the mayor, but I can work outside the box. Someone said, "You and the mayor are alike; both of you are unorthodox." I said, "That's right, we are."

■ You have worked for the church most of your life, you came into this secular environment, and you're a friend of the mayor. What was it like making the transition?

Scary. I had always worked in what I now say is the "safe" environment of the church. I had thought then that there were no challenges like the ones there. Now I feel that God was preparing me for these even greater challenges.

■ What particular challenges did you face?

I wasn't prepared for the political challenges. It's a whole different context: a dog-eat-dog world. Being a friend of the mayor—when he introduced me he said, "She's like my sister"—doesn't help in the political world. In fact, it almost hurts, because people are just waiting for an opportunity to see if you get a special break. We've decided that won't happen. We have an understanding that there will be no special perks. If I get something, it will be because I earned it—not because I got any special favors.

■ How do you prepare yourself for the challenges?

I usually get up at 4:30, but this morning I got up even earlier, at 3:45. I have to spend a solid two hours every morning with the Lord. Part of that time is spent walking in the park near

our home. The more challenges I face, the more time I have to spend with the Lord. If I miss a day, that's when it's scary. I say every day, "Lord, it's going to be amazing today how You do things. How are You going to work this out?" It's an adventure, but I have to spend the time with Him so I can know His plan. I'm not smart enough. I certainly don't have the political savvy. People come to me and ask, "Where did you learn your politics?" I don't have politics; I just listen to the Lord. That's literally how I operate every day.

■ *What's another challenge?*

We have zero dollars. We started this office with no dollars, zero, zippo, zilch. I had to raise the money for salaries to bring in my staff.

■ *How did you raise the money?*

I identified corporate partners. We meet every first Friday of the month, and we talk about how we want to flesh out our program. Of course I had a basic idea, having done it at the conference for 23 years, but I still make our partners an integral part of how the dollars come to the table. We don't have anything left over, but we go do exciting things so people will think we have big budgets.

■ *How big is your staff?*

We have two secretaries; the city provided one and the other wanted to join our staff. I hired Kemba Esmond (formerly of the Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, Maryland), as my administrative assistant, and Melchior Monk (formerly of Pine Forge Academy, Pine Forge, Pennsylvania) as my liaison from this office; their salaries were raised by a local pharmaceutical company.

■ *Is all of your staff Adventist?*

No, but they are Christians. Everybody knows that I am a Seventh-day Adventist. Hardly any article written about me neglects to mention it. I always

bring it up. Reporters ask, "Where did you get your ideas?" I didn't make up the eight natural remedies, so I have to tell them my background.

■ *How does your staff relate to your Sabbath observance?*

You should hear the secretaries talking to people on the telephone when someone asks if I would lead out in a parade or a marathon on Sabbath. They say, "Oh, that's the Sabbath. Mrs. Foster doesn't accept those kinds of engagements on Sabbath." I let them go with it. If a church or hope to do those three times a year. In August, we had a program at a hospital auditorium for seven weeks, two nights a week. People didn't think it would work, but out of the 70 people who came, 67 finished, and 31 never missed a night. That shows you how desperate people are. We plan those four times a year. We also have a 30-minute television show on Time Warner Cable that airs 7:30 a.m. and p.m., seven days a week. We also have events for the public. "Dine Out on Healthy Street" happens once a month, so local restaurants can show off their efforts at making healthy menus available. That's the one time I get to see the mayor because our schedules are so busy. We just held our second annual Fun, Fit & Free Festival where the mayor and I led hundreds of Philadelphians on a three-mile walk from City Hall to the waterfront at Penn's landing. Along with the Philadelphia 76ers basketball team co-owner Pat Croce, we created "76 Tons of Fun," a weight-loss program for the whole city.

■ *How do you share your faith in the secular environment in which you work and live?*

I don't have to preach. The principles I teach point to a Creator. Most people agree that an intelligent being had to come up with these principles. Everyone who goes through the programs is in more of a situation to hear the Creator. They ask, "What else have you got?

We want to study the Bible with you." We meet Muslims and others, but most religious values and principles are the same. I have no problem sharing my faith. I love it!

■ *What advice would you give young people starting their careers in a secular environment?*

You can witness in any arena. The best way is being out in the environment and living it. People are tired of hearing sermons; they want to see them. Every one has a circle of influence. You may have no idea that people are watching you.

■ *Tell me some of your success stories.*

A school nurse was going to have her leg amputated, but she needed to have it done before going back to school in September. She heard about our program and joined it. Of course, her diabetes was under control, her insulin dosage had been cut in half, and she got to keep her leg. I received a letter from a city worker who attended the seven-week program. He told me he lost eight pounds, and his waist measurement came down from 46 inches to 43 inches. He ended his letter by saying, "Thank you for your program. Thank you to our mayor for hiring a health czar." *Men's Fitness* magazine, which had designated Philadelphia as the fattest city in the U.S. in 2000, came back, walked with us, gave us this big plaque, and congratulated us for creating an awareness of health—the likes of which had never been created in the United States or around the world.

Interview by Vikki Montgomery.

Vikki Montgomery is the associate editor of Liberty magazine. E-mail: montvi@nad.adventist.org

For information on the health programs promoted by the city of Philadelphia, check its web site: www.phila.gov or gwen.foster@phila.gov



Michael A. Comberiate

Dialogue with an Adventist rocket scientist

Michael A. Comberiate, a systems manager for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), in Greenbelt, Maryland, has worked at the Goddard Space Flight Center since 1969. He holds a master's degree in electrical engineering from the University of Maryland. As an engineer, he has designed electronics for numerous satellite projects. Some of those missions have reached the moon and beyond. Since 1984, Comberiate has also initiated more than 50 special projects (<http://coolspace.gsfc.nasa.gov>), involving interagency cooperation to produce quick response results with very limited resources. On the recommendation of the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Geological Survey named a glacier after him for one of his contributions to the modern exploration of Antarctica and other remote regions.

Internationally respected as a leader with innovative ideas, he is well known for his unique hi-tech educational outreach program called, "You Be the Scientist," sponsored by NASA's EOS Aqua Project. His work with the greater academic community since 1995 has created a practical means of economically distributing sophisticated data products throughout the United States with the tools and techniques they need to process the data and fit into their ongoing curricular activities.

Comberiate's other interests include house building and martial arts. He has taught martial arts since 1968 and holds a 5th degree black belt. Performing in national championships and house building were both responsible for developing in him a strong "can do" spirit. He is also quite a traveler, having been around the world 17 times, including to the South Pole seven times and to the North Pole three times.

Comberiate was born into a line of Catholics, dating back at least as far as the first millennium. Never satisfied with minimal explanations for his faith, he questioned everything and eventually found that the Bible had more answers in it than most Christians realize. Applying his engineering and scientific background to understanding this ancient text, he has been able to unravel some long-standing mysteries in a logical way that a rocket scientist could accept.

Comberiate is married to Karla, an occupational therapist and home-schooling mother. They have two sons and live in one of the houses they built outside of Washington, D.C. If you want to send a postcard to them from anywhere in the world, just address it: NASA Mike, 20777 USA.

■ *What inspired you to pursue a career at NASA, and how long have you worked there?*

The space race was on while I was in elementary school, and the place to go when I graduated from the University of Maryland in the 1960s was NASA. I have now worked in NASA for more than 32 years.

■ *You grew up Catholic. How did you learn about the Seventh-day Adventist Church?*

I was one of those Catholics who really questioned what they believed. I would ask about these mysteries—three persons in one God, eternal hell, life after death, and so on. I never got any really good answers. As I was still looking, I caught some TV shows that talked about the Seventh-day Sabbath and the Book of Revelation. I got interested in it, and one day my wife gave me a pamphlet from the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which I knew almost nothing about. They were giving a Revelation Seminar in the area, so I went. The people giving the talk came to my house and we ended up playing golf together. We started studying these issues for a couple years. I went to church with them at the Spencerville Seventh-day Adventist Church, in Maryland, and then got into Bible class with them. I didn't think they could answer all these questions I had any better than the next person, but they did answer them differently and they used the Bible literally, which was a first for me. So I stayed with it until I could get answers. I attended church regularly from 1988 and was baptized in September 1994.

■ *What was it that really convinced you to become an Adventist?*

The mysteries as they make sense to me now fit perfectly into Adventist theology. Their understanding of the state of the dead, the definition of hell, and the seventh-day Sabbath—fit perfectly into a Big Picture view that all made sense, so that attracted me to the Adventist Church.

You can use certain texts to prove what you want. Another person can use the same texts to prove the opposite. One has got to be wrong, but how do you figure it out? The only way to ever get through it is to get the big picture. Most churches have stopped with huge voids in their understanding. Their version of the puzzle is still full of major holes. As long as you have mysteries, you have room for interpretations. Science is very similar: As long as you don't know the answers, you can have another theory. As long as you don't know the answers, you can start another religion. And you can all say, "We believe the Bible, even though we only understand 10 percent of it. So 90 percent of our picture is holes." But then they'll cover it by saying, "But you're supposed to have faith!" And that's an insult to a person who's really scientific. Faith in what? The holes?

I think we Adventists have more of the puzzle filled in, and we should use that to defend our interpretations of the Bible, because if you don't know the truth, you'll believe a lie.

■ *What currently inspires you to continue in your field?*

At NASA, I had the ability to make a positive difference. We're on the cutting edge of the technology explosion that's characteristic of our age. And it's changing the way we do things.

■ *Tell us about your online book How a Rocket Scientist Can Trust God.*

Generally you think of a rocket scientist as someone who's really logical,

somebody who's into mathematics—and the things of the world—and not interested in any kind of emotional or passionate belief system. A rocket scientist is more into practical applications and things you can reproduce than he or she is into just feeling good.

How is it then that a rocket scientist could end up as one of those people with passionate religious beliefs? Most people look at religion as "the opium of the people." You've got a system of beliefs that make you feel good, but what God is looking for is a relationship.

So how can a rocket scientist trust God? Because you can have a relationship with Him. You can learn to talk to Him. It doesn't make any difference whether you have any math background or not—if you have a relationship with God, that is what's important.

Another important thing is that the belief system makes sense. A rocket scientist can trust God if their concept of God makes a lot of sense in view of the observable evidence. If I said to an atheist: "What kind of God you don't believe in?" we'd find that atheists believe in God also. They just don't believe in a personal God. In other words, they generally believe that there's a First Cause, that had no cause, but their question is whether that First Cause is personal. So when you say to me: "You're a rocket scientist, and you don't believe in God, right? You believe in 'big bangs' and all that, but you don't believe in a God that's got a plan for us here on planet Earth?" I say: "No, I do. I believe in a God who can think at least as well as I can, which to me means that God is personal."

■ *Did your conversion cause you to reconsider your professional aspirations?*

No. My conversion was a slow process, developing over time. I've always thought of myself as a seeker of the truth. I'm looking with all my heart for the answers. So where I was at the time, and where I am now, is not that impor-

tant as long as I'm still looking. I now talk to God about whatever it is I'm doing, whereas in the past I didn't identify that as an important thing to do. Now I've found that there's this relationship with God that depends on communication, and I spend more time trying to bring that into whatever is happening. When I'm good, bad, happy, or sad, I talk to God.

■ *Have you been successful in your faith and your work?*

For me, "success" is to live life to the fullest and to know that God is sharing it with me because of the close relationship we have had through it all. I expect to continue this relationship into forever. The only difference in heaven will be that there is no grief, no disease, and no waiting in lines.

■ *What advice would you give to students struggling to marry their scientific knowledge with their Adventist faith?*

I can see how Adventist theology actually makes logical sense and fits both the Bible and the observable facts. You can, too, if you think about it logically. My advice is to find the model of how all the mysteries of your belief system fit into a consistent big picture, which makes sense in terms of the observable evidence.

I explain this big picture, as I understand it, on my website [www.nasamike.com]. You can begin from there and complete the puzzle by seeking answers with all your heart. You must use the scientific method to collect the facts, but then you must make an emotional decision on how to respond to what you understand to be truth.

Interview by Kimberly Luste Maran

Kimberly Luste Maran is an assistant editor of the Adventist Review: www.adventistreview.org

Caleb's finest hour

by Roy Gane

Born a slave, with a name that means “dog.”
 “Hey there, slave boy, what’s your name?”

“My name is Caleb, sir.”

“Dog...huh, that’s appropriate.”

But God set Caleb and his people free. Most Israelites never quite understood what freedom was all about. They thought it was milk and honey instead of fleshpots and onions. They thought the man with the magic stick was supposed to lead them comfortably to the Promised Land in no time at all. But when they saw obstacles looming on the horizon, the food and water run out, or the man with the stick disappear up a mountain for a few weeks, their freedom became chaos, their taste buds remembered those fleshpots, and they lusted for slavery because that’s what they were—still slaves at heart.

Caleb was different. He knew that freedom was to serve a new, divine Master. Others looked around and complained to Moses, but Caleb looked up to the radiant pillar of cloud and praised the God who had set him free.

Sooner or later, the difference between Caleb’s attitude and that of his people was sure to result in a head-on collision. It happened at Kadesh-barnea, in the wilderness of Paran, when he returned from spying out the land of Canaan with eleven other chieftains. The spies were unanimous in affirming that the land did indeed flow with milk and honey, and to prove it they brought some sweet fruit, including a gargantuan cluster of grapes.

But 10 of the spies accentuated the negative: strong people, fortified towns,

giants. Hearts melted and the Promised Land suddenly seemed unpromising. Losing their pre-Christian experience, the Israelites grumbled: “It is because the Lord hates us that he has brought us out of the land of Egypt, to hand us over to the Amorites to destroy us” (Deuteronomy 1:27).^{*} Perfect fear casts out love (contrast 1 John 4:18).

Moses tried to reassure the people, but the clamor of complaining only crescendoed. Then a man stepped forward and cried out, *Has!* which is Hebrew for what it sounds like: “Hush!” It was Caleb of Judah. He was not a polished motivational speaker, but his next words should be the motto and mission statement of anyone who desires to enter the Lord’s rest in the better land that He has promised. Caleb urged, “Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it” (Numbers 13:30).

Unrealistic?

“We are well able.” Unrealistic?! Caleb knew what the fortifications and giants were like because, unlike most of the people, he had seen them. His people lacked the personnel, resources, infrastructure, and budget to overcome the obstacles. But when Caleb said, “We are well able,” he included the Lord in the word “We” because God was with His people.

So why didn’t Joshua, another spy, also make a speech? He agreed with Caleb. But he had been Moses’ assistant. Everyone knew he had vested interests. People who wouldn’t listen to Moses certainly wouldn’t heed Joshua. But Caleb didn’t have this special connec-

tion. He could have easily sided with the other 10 spies. After all, weren’t they the majority?

It was theocracy, not majority, that ruled Caleb’s heart. Democracy could be a good thing, but not even a landslide vote could budge Caleb’s dogged determination to follow the Lord. Perhaps for one brief, shining moment Caleb’s courage kindled a spark of hope. But it was quickly quenched when the oral majority took over the podium and began to filibuster. Determined to depress, they badmouthed the land they had earlier praised, saying that it “devours its inhabitants.” They exaggerated, likening themselves to grasshoppers in the presence of the inhabitants of Canaan, and they claimed to have seen Nefilim, descendants of the renowned giants who lived before the Flood. Canaan was a Jurassic park, inhabited by humansauruses.

All that night the Israelites watered the wilderness of Paran with their tears, and in the morning they rose up to rebel against their leaders, Moses and Aaron. Joshua and Caleb tore their clothes and pleaded with the people, but got nothing for their trouble except threats: “The whole congregation threatened to stone them” (Numbers 14:10).

So God served the entire adult generation of Israelites a sentence that fitted their crime: They would not enter Canaan, and they would die in the wilderness. Except Caleb and Joshua. The Lord singled out loyal Caleb for special mention: “But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me wholeheartedly, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it”

(Numbers 14:24).

After mourning again, the people arose the next morning, ready to go: "Here we are. We will go up to the place that the Lord has promised, for we have sinned" (vs. 40). This was confession without repentance. Previously unwilling to go where God led, now they wanted to go where he was no longer leading. Against Moses' warning, they "presumed to go up to the heights of the hill country" (vs. 44) and got themselves chased all over southern Palestine.

Lagging behind, rushing ahead, barking up the wrong tree. My home, which we're starting to call the Land of Canine, has two dogs like that. When we go for a walk, it's not natural for Shadow and Prince to "heel." They want to strain at the ends of their leashes in order to be the lead dog, and they are easily distracted by a potential snack of road kill or a deliciously disgusting aroma. To get some control, Connie, my wife, took Shadow to obedience lessons. And although he and Connie have had some serious disagreements, he is learning to stay with us when we walk. It takes time.

It took time for the Israelites to learn to stay with the Lord. He trained them by leading them all over the wilderness, away from distractions.

Hounding the giants out

Forty years didn't make Caleb stronger physically. Neither did they diminish his trust in God. When it finally came time to take the land, 85-year-old Caleb requested the worst possible neighborhood: Hebron, where the most gigantic giants were. As an example to the Israelites, to prove the truth of what he had said at Kadesh-barnea, Caleb volunteered for the greatest challenge and hounded those giants out of town (Judges 1:20). Because he was following the Lord, giants were his natural prey.

Caleb settled down on his inherit-

ance. But we hear of him one more time. He had a daughter named Achsah, and he wanted her to marry a real man. So, as in some fairy tales, he advertised that he would give her to a man who accomplished a heroic deed. In this case, the deed was to take the city of Kiryat-sepher, which means, "Book Town." Othniel won the prize and married Achsah, to whom Caleb gave a piece of land.

Now Achsah was grateful for the land, but to thrive on it her family would need water for irrigation. So she urged Othniel to request a field with springs of water on it. But Othniel was reticent to ask any more from his powerful father-in-law. We can hear Achsah saying, "Go on, Othniel, he's a nice man. You conquered a city, but you're afraid to talk to my father?" Achsah ended up asking Caleb herself, and he generously gave her two sets of springs (Joshua 15:19; Judges 1:15).

Caleb's finest hour

So what was Caleb's finest hour? Perhaps his speech at Kadesh-barnea, when he stood up to the entire Israelite congregation? Or maybe his choice of challenging the Hebron giants? I would suggest another possibility: Caleb's finest "hour" was the 40 years in the wilderness. This was truly a heroic wait. If anyone had a right to complain, it was Caleb. Because of the mistakes of others, he was deprived of 40 years of life in the Promised Land, where he could enjoy milk and honey while sitting under his vine or his fig tree. He didn't need all those years of extra training. He was ready to go. But rather than rushing off to conquer Canaan by himself, he stayed with the Lord and His faulty people.

We learn from the later story of Othniel that Caleb was not idle in the wilderness. He helped educate the next generation to do as he did: to wholeheartedly follow the Lord, to expect great things, and to be assured that God

would provide for His own, just as Caleb provided for his daughter. That next generation did enter the Promised Land, and at a time of crisis Othniel became the first of the judges, who led Israel to deliverance.

Many of us study or work in academia, Book-Town. There have been intellectual battles in the past, and there will be bigger ones in the future. But right now we are in the position of Caleb during the 40 years. We are teaching or learning how to wholeheartedly follow the Lord all the way, in spite of fortifications, giants, and tribulations, to the place where "the Lamb...will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 7:17).

In the book *Early Writings*, at a strategic point just before describing her first vision (p. 14), Ellen White wrote: "I have tried to bring back a good report and a few grapes from the heavenly Canaan, for which many would stone me, as the congregation bade stone Caleb and Joshua for their report. (Num. 14:10.) But I declare to you, my brethren and sisters in the Lord, it is a goodly land, and we are well able to go up and possess it."

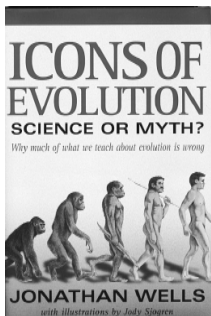
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* All Scripture passages are quoted from the New Revised Standard Version.

Book Review Essay

Demolishing the icons of evolution

by Earl Aagaard



Icons of Evolution: Science or Myth?

by Jonathan Wells
(Washington, D.C.:
Regnery Publishing,
Inc., 2000; 338 pp.;
hardbound).

Was the universe designed? Or did it come about spontaneously by natural means? Christians have known the answer for centuries—from Paul’s short exposition in Romans 1:20 to William Paley’s *Natural Theology*. The design so evident in the natural world points directly to an intelligent Being, who planned and then created the universe and everything in it.

Charles Darwin’s work changed this certainty; gradually his antipathy to anything smacking of the supernatural took over the scientific enterprise. Today’s scientific view was expressed by George Gaylord Simpson in 1949: “Although many details remain to be worked out, it is already evident that all the objective phenomena of the history of life can be explained by purely... materialistic factors.... *Man is the result of a purposeless and natural process that did not have him in mind*” (italics added).

Today, “science” is widely seen as being ruled by evidence that can be sensed: It uses measurements, quantitative analysis, statistical testing, etc. Since scientists seem convinced by Darwin—life is the outgrowth of matter, acted upon by natural law and chance

events plus selection. One naturally assumes that there is lots of evidence to support what is, superficially, an absurd proposition. Indeed, high school and college biology textbooks provide what initially appears to be the convincing evidence we expect.

Jonathan Wells’ new book says we are being deceived.

Wells is a theologian (Ph.D., Yale University) and a molecular and developmental biologist (Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley). He has taught biology at California State University, Hayward, and conducted post-doctoral research at Berkeley. He says he entered U.C. Berkeley convinced that all living organisms descended from a single common ancestor, but discovered during graduate study data in conflict with this fundamental Darwinian claim. This discovery was the genesis of his book, *Icons of Evolution*. In Wells’ own words, “An icon is an image whose significance goes far beyond that of a mere picture. It is a symbol, and also an object of reverence.” His book unmasks 10 of the major “icons” of Evolution—the “top 10” evidences used to support Darwin’s theory.

Haeckel’s embryological chart

Since Wells was studying developmental biology, it’s only fitting that the first of the “icons” he began to question was the embryological chart produced by Ernst Haeckel in the 1800s—a chart still being used in many biology textbooks. Haeckel taught that early vertebrate embryos were all very similar, because during their development,

each embryo (in the egg or in the womb) passed through the same stages of evolution between the original single-celled organism and its current form. Haeckel’s famous chart makes it look very much as if early embryos are strikingly similar, becoming more and more different as they grow older. However, during his study of vertebrate embryos, Wells learned that Haeckel’s drawings are a classic case of twisting the evidence. In his chart, Haeckel used only those species whose embryos fit his theory. Not satisfied with this, he portrayed embryos varying in size from 1 to 10 millimeters as exactly the same size. Worse yet, he actually falsified some of the drawings, removing parts from some embryos and adding parts to others—all to make it appear that the evidence supported his theory. Finally, he left out the earliest stages of each embryo altogether, because in these stages the embryos are not similar at all, flatly contradicting his proposition.

Perhaps the most shocking thing about the story of Haeckel and his embryo chart is that the scientific community has long known about the fakery! Some of his own scientific colleagues criticized Haeckel in print, even charging him with fraud. His cheating was not forgotten, either, as the forgeries have been periodically re-exposed in the professional literature throughout the 20th century. Nevertheless, Haeckel’s embryos, in one form or another, are still appearing in biology textbooks as evidence for the common ancestry of all vertebrates. Raven and Johnson’s *Biology*, published in 1999, tells college students “the evolutionary history of

an organism can be seen to unfold during its development, with the embryo exhibiting characteristics of the embryos of its ancestors." How can this be, in a community dedicated to following the evidence wherever it leads? Wells tells the entire story in his book, convincingly dismantling this piece of the foundational evidence for the Darwinian story of evolutionary development.

The peppered moth

The British peppered moth is Icon No. 2 demolished by Wells. It has been one of the most widely used stories in textbooks, and its loss is devastating because no other case known to biology comes close to its persuasive power. Briefly, when Darwin wrote *The Origin of Species*, he suffered from a lack of "real-world" examples of natural selection. All that he could offer was the roughly analogous situation of "artificial selection," the method used by breeders of dogs, horses, pigeons, etc. to produce the many varieties of these domestic and farm animals that are so useful in society. However, there are difficulties with artificial selection as an example of how natural selection works. Artificial selection requires a pre-existing intelligence to direct the breeding; to hold the end-point in mind, to select variations that bring the animal closer to the "target" at which the breeder is aiming. In nature, according to the Darwinists, there is no intelligence, no target, and no planning, making the analogy problematic in the extreme. Furthermore, breeders have found that every species has an "envelope of variability" around it; there is a limit to what can be achieved by selection and breeding. We can breed dogs as big as wolfhounds and as small as chihuahuas, but never as big as horses or as small as mice. As the size (or other) limit is approached, fertility decreases until no viable offspring result. There is no evidence that this limitation can be avoided in wild popula-

tions. This precludes the radical differentiation that Darwinism demands.

Thus, the excitement within the scientific community over *Biston betularia*, the peppered moth. The classic story goes like this: Before the Industrial Revolution and the extensive burning of coal, England was largely unpolluted. In the parks and woods lived the peppered moth, with generally light wings, "peppered" with many dark flecks. This color pattern camouflaged the moth as it slept on the trunks of lichen-covered trees. Old insect collections reveal that there were also a few truly *dark* moths in the population, but these moths stood out against the light-colored lichens, and their survival rate was never high. However, as coal dust blanketed the countryside surrounding the industrial cities of England, the lichens died, and the darkened tree-trunks no longer protected the light-colored moths. Their numbers began to decrease, even as the dark moths, now well-camouflaged while they slept, began a population explosion. Finally, in polluted woodlands, the ratio of dark to light moths was reversed. The peppered moth was apparently a vindication of Darwin's theory about evolution occurring by means of natural selection.

Except...except that in the early 1980s, it was discovered that the story had a fatal flaw. The moths don't naturally roost on tree-trunks. The photographs in all the textbooks were staged—using either dead moths glued to their perch, or live moths, stunned by daylight, being carefully placed on the spot where they would be photographed! Furthermore, in some areas unpolluted by soot, moths became darker about the same time. It turns out that scientists don't really know why peppered moths changed color, yet 20 years later, some biology textbooks were still printing the photographs and telling the Darwinist story—a story that the scientific community knew to be false.

More icons

There are eight more icons in the book, ranging from the Miller-Urey experiments on the origin of life, through the "pentadactyl (or five-fingered) limb" appearing in all vertebrates, to the "branching tree" pattern of horse fossils, to *Archaeopteryx*, which may be the ancestor of all birds or simply an ancient bird with teeth, depending on whom you ask. We learn the history of each of these, plus of Darwin's finches, the "Tree of Life," four-winged fruit flies, and the "ultimate icon" of human evolution from primitive ape-like creatures. Wells carefully describes each case, and then compares it to published scientific evidence, making it crystal clear that every single one of them, in one way or another, misrepresents the truth in order to convince the public that Darwinism is true.

Icons of Evolution has been attacked in the scientific press, although most reviewers concede that Wells is at least partially correct in his assessment of the "icons" and their use. The usual approach is to call Wells a "creationist," or bring up his membership in the Unification Church, as if *ad hominem* attacks somehow solve the empirical problems his book elucidates. Wells' writing is engaging and accessible, and anyone who has had a biology course in high school should be able to follow the arguments. Every Christian with an interest in origins and in the cultural "war" between theism and materialism should read this book. It gives us a fundamentally encouraging message—that the Darwinist conventional wisdom is not scientifically supported nearly so strongly as the scientific community wishes us to believe. The proof is here—in the dubious use of the "Icons of Evolution."

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Ethics for scientists: A call for stewardship

by Katrina A. Bramstedt

While practicing any profession, our best ethical mirror is that provided by Christ.

Biototechnology is a rapidly expanding field in medicine. *Star Trek* concepts such as body scans and tumor targeted light therapy are now standard clinical practice. Implants are available to treat a range of cardiac, neurological, and orthopedic conditions. Synthetic¹ and cross-species replacement organs² are on the horizon. While a scientist's intent may be beneficent clinical technology, the steps between the research and development bench and the patient's bedside are numerous and complex. Technologies that might seem ethically appropriate conceptually require ethical discourse throughout each stage of development. Even after the technology hits the marketplace, the ethical responsibility does not end. From a Christian perspective, ethical stewardship of our God-given talents and the technologies that arise from them are essential to the growth of science, to fostering trust in science, and to maximizing beneficence amid the clinical applications of science.

A key concept in any research undertaking is trust. Society at large is unskilled in matters of research and science, and because of this, they put their trust in scientists to handle matters. They recognize scientists as experts with unique training and skills that they themselves do not have. Lacking this training and skill, they are in a vulnerable position. Society looks to scientists to tackle the hard clinical questions and hopefully to solve them. Thus said, scientists have a great responsibility to the people who put their

trust in them, especially because many of the people who rely on science are the most vulnerable—the sick.

Intellectual honesty

How does this responsibility take shape? Clearly, intellectual honesty is critical to valid scientific research. Unintentional mistakes are different matters from those of outright misconduct such as falsification and plagiarism. Not only is data falsification (making up data or experiments, changing data) a violation of society's trust in science, it also results in the misuse of scarce resource funding and invalidates future studies that sprout from the project in question. Additionally, research of this nature has the effect of delaying the progress of science that could be beneficial to patients because it can reduce or eliminate opportunities for funding and collegiality with other scientists. Fraudulent science can also harm patients by occluding potentially negative data.

Plagiarism can appear in many forms, but its most prominent manifestation is the taking of another's work as one's own. Not only is this dishonest, it also disrespects the diligence and skill that a colleague has invested in the concept or product. While the two parties may be thousands of miles away and unknown to each other, the parties are nonetheless colleagues due to the nature of science as a profession. Even the presence of a power differential in a relationship such as teacher-student and employer-employee does not usurp

the ethical responsibility to give credit when credit is due. Further, such a responsible attitude fosters collegial relationships and the growth of science as scientists trust one another enough to share and learn from one another.

Often, in the course of a research project, relationships form that could potentially harm the credibility of the scientists or their project. These relationships commonly take the form of financial gain, such as project-related stock ownership or direct payment from the corporate study sponsor. These can be termed a conflict of interest because they could impair the researcher's objectivity during the course of the project. As government research funding shrinks and academic-industry relationships steadily increase, issues of this nature must be explored for their ramifications for science as a profession and on the patients the technologies intend to serve. Even if conflicts of interest such as financial ties cannot be avoided, at a minimum they should be disclosed to one's fellow scientists and society (during article publication, for example) in an effort to promote openness and objectivity about the generated data. While dualities of interest may exist, our priorities must be in ethical alignment.

Use of animals

Although this is not the forum to debate the ethical permissibility of the use of animals in scientific research, it is clear that few if any technologies reach human use without first requir-

ing animal testing. Knowing this, the welfare of laboratory animals must be kept in mind. Amid our Christian duty of dominion over animals (Genesis 9:2; Daniel 2:38) this could well include matters of nutrition, hydration, housing, and veterinary care throughout the course of laboratory experimentation. Studies should be designed such that they use the minimum number of animals to provide scientific and statistical validity. Studies should consider the use of non-animal models when appropriate (e.g., computer simulations), and they should be designed in a way that minimizes pain and suffering for the animals. All studies should be approved by an institutional animal welfare committee under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian. As with any study that becomes futile, it should be halted or discontinued in an effort of ethical stewardship of resources (financial and otherwise).³

Human application

The ultimate goal of much of scientific research is direct human application, and thus human clinical trials are standard practice. A common misconception held by many clinical trial volunteers is that they believe study participation will benefit them personally.⁴ This belief is especially a risk for subjects who lack medical insurance and for whom clinical trial enrollment is their only source of "health care." It is also a risk for patients who have "tried everything" and consider a clinical trial their "only hope." When enrolling patients in clinical trials, scientists have a moral duty to clearly inform them that clinical research is performed to collect data for the benefit of *future* patients and that any benefit immediately gained by the research participant is an altruistic bonus.

It is inappropriate for a scientist to portray his or her study in a fashion that might generate false hopes for the participants. Selection of people for tri-

al participation should be carried out under strict guidelines from an institutional review board, using approved protocols that respect the participant's safety and welfare. Potential participants should be given ample information about the study design and its risks in a manner in which they can comprehend, and they should be allowed to freely volunteer for the study without coercion. Both physical and psychological harms should be minimized and participants should be allowed to withdraw from a research study at any time. Privacy and confidentiality should be maintained, and genetic studies should incorporate additional safeguards as appropriate, including genetic counseling. Research subjects, whether human or animal, should not be used as a means to an end. As God's creation, they are ends in themselves and should be provided with available protections and treated with respect.

Mentoring

A crucial tool to facilitating the ethical responsibilities that I have mentioned is mentoring. Both young and "seasoned" scientists, can benefit from skillful mentoring by experienced colleagues. This mentoring should take the form of both technical advice and moral guidance. In addition to providing direction through direct verbal or written instruction, good mentors also teach by example. Being able to "walk the talk" speaks volumes to one's students and fellow scientists and helps train them to be good mentors to others. Good mentoring is also a witness to society that scientists are genuinely concerned about the integrity of their profession.

While practicing any profession, our best ethical mirror is that provided by Christ. Science is imperfect and fallible because scientists are imperfect and fallible. While we may seek knowledge, we are not all-knowing and we may tarry in areas that some would argue are

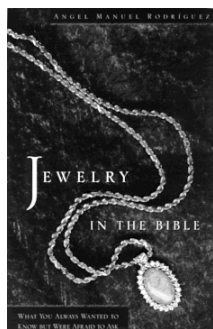
ethically inappropriate (e.g., certain methods of assisted reproduction, genetic manipulation, life-extension research, etc.). Because the Bible is not prescriptive in these "high-tech" areas, Christian scientists should seek counsel from God through prayer. Our Creator has given us, His stewards, talents and tools to facilitate the growth of science and the health of patients, yet these talents and tools aren't without the responsibility of ethical use. Both the process and the products of using our talents hold the ethical responsibilities of respecting those around us, protecting them from harm, and maximizing the benefits our research efforts can provide.

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Books



Jewelry in the Bible,
by Ángel M. Rodríguez (Silver Spring,
Maryland: General Conference Ministerial
Association, 1999; 125 pp.; paperback).

Reviewed by Eloy Wade.



La perfección cristiana
by Jean Zurcher (Madrid: Editorial Safeliz,
1999; 174 pp., softbound).

Reviewed by Edgar J. Escobar Suárez.

Among Seventh-day Adventists, the use of jewelry is a delicate subject. From the definition of jewelry to the parable of the prodigal son who is welcomed home with a ring, Adventists love to debate the issue of whether or not one should wear jewelry. (Have you ever heard the argument: An ornament that touches the skin is jewelry; one that adorns a dress is not?)

Traditionally, the Adventist Church has asserted that the use of jewelry is prohibited in the Scriptures, and is inappropriate for a Christian. But in recent times, diverse voices have objected to that stance, alleging that the Bible not only does not condemn the use of jewelry but that it promotes it. That is the origin of the present study.

After explaining his purpose in writing the book, defining what is meant by jewelry, indicating how the discussion is organized, and establishing the foundation of Christian norms, the author discusses recent tendencies in the use of jewelry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The book divides itself into two parts. The first one deals with references to jewelry in the Old and New Testaments, discussing usage, attitudes, and evaluating the relevant passages. The second one develops an exegesis of pertinent passages in the New Testament, including 1 Peter 3:1-6, 1 Timothy 2:9, 10, and 1 Timothy 2:11-15. The second part is a reflection and evaluation of the foundations of the Adventist practice on jewelry. The book concludes with the implications of the subject for the church today. The study has three short appendixes, providing official statements of the church and Ellen G. White stand on the subject.

The author is well organized and logically persuasive in the presentation of his material. The research and exegesis that has gone into this work deserve to be taken seriously. The book is not necessarily everything you always wanted to know about jewelry, but it clarifies issues in the light of what the Bible says on the topic and what the Christian conduct and lifestyle ought to be.

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Does Christian perfection mean total victory over sin, and the eradication of our sinful nature? Does perfection demand that our corrupt and sinful nature be completely destroyed—not simply neutralized? Does perfection mean sinlessness here and now?

These and related questions are disturbing to many Seventh-day Adventists. Jean Zurcher's revised edition of a work that originally appeared in French in 1993 answers these and other questions from a biblical perspective. The answers are not only satisfactory, but also build a hermeneutical paradigm on the study of a vital topic in Christian theology.

Zurcher is a theologian with his heart rooted in the Bible and his service grounded in the mission of the church. His approach to the topic takes on different, but well integrated, cues: that of a pastor, a missionary, a teacher, and a theologian. He approaches the study within a wholistic, biblical context. He digs deep in the Old and New Testaments, studying key words in their original language, and placing each passage in its immediate and larger contexts. He searches for unity and harmony, allowing the Bible to be its own interpreter, and different portions of the Word to explain each other.

Throughout the development, organization, and presentation of the topic, the author uses biblical texts as the ground for his conclusions. These conclusions are concisely and clearly expressed through studies of Bible characters, such as Noah, David, Asa, John, and Paul. The doctrine of perfection, after all, is a practical one, touching lives as they are lived out.

The book also presents sub-topics about God's perfection, Jesus' invitation to perfection, and divine instruments that help in perfection. One section of the book deals with perfection of Christian character from Ellen G. White's perspective.

Zurcher's marshaling of all this research leads to one conclusion: Perfection is the work of God's grace in us, as He abides in us through the Holy Spirit. The issue is not one of sinlessness, but one of abiding continually in God's grace, claiming His promises, and obeying His Word. Perfection is not so much a destination as a direction—moving toward the home God has prepared for us, while all the time holding on to Him by the hand of faith. Without holding on to Jesus, there is no perfection possible.

Dr. Zurcher's book is a worthy contribution to Christian theology, in that it clarifies the issues surrounding the doctrine of perfection, and challenges us to experience the joy of God's grace.

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Lutherans & Adventists in Conversation: Report and Papers Presented, 1994-1998

(Silver Spring, Maryland: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists; Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2000; 319 pp.; hardcover).

Reviewed by Rolf J. Poehler.

From 1994 to 1998, the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Lutheran World Federation were engaged in bilateral conversations. The Federation represents 57 million members, more than 95 percent of Lutherans around the world. These theological conversations were to achieve better mutual understanding, remove unjust prejudices, and explore areas of (dis)agreement. The results are in the final report.

The report also contains 18 scholarly papers presented during the consultations, making up the bulk of the book. The language, style, quality, and approach of these papers differ considerably, some being more substantial and scholarly than others. They help the reader to better understand areas of convergence/divergence relating to doctrinal views of both faith communions on Scripture, salvation, church, and eschatology.

The outcome of the conversations is significant in at least three ways. *First*, the Lutheran acceptance of Adventists as "a free church and a Christian world communion," rather than a sect, as was common in the past. *Second*, both sides have called upon their respective constituencies to present the other side "truthfully and unpolemically" and to recognize its "basic Christian commitment." For Adventists this implies a more positive appreciation of "other Christian churches" and a deliberate, non-exclusive "remnant" concept. *Third*, both sides have called for increased "inter-church relations" and "conscientious co-operation," which includes joint prayer, Bible study, and witness, as well as pastoral gatherings and theological consultations.

While "each faith communion will continue to maintain its identity and convictions" as well as its "distinctive emphases," significant theological convergences are manifest. Areas

of doctrinal agreement include the primacy of Christ, the authority of the Scriptures, salvation as a free gift of grace, and the belief in a final judgment.

However, important doctrinal and hermeneutical differences remain, particularly with regard to apocalyptic prophecy. While Adventists support foundational Lutheran views, they are also *Adventist Christians*, encompassing in their understanding of the "eternal gospel" distinctive teachings on the commandments/Sabbath, sanctuary/judgment, prophecy/final events, and ethics/lifestyle. On the other hand, while sharing in the advent hope, Lutherans focus on the specific *Lutheran* understanding of the gospel (justification by faith, Christian freedom, the sacraments). Lutherans study the Bible by employing the gospel as a critical hermeneutical key and in the light of the historical-critical method. Adventists generally take Scripture as a whole and as it reads.

Some Adventists may wish that more had been achieved in these conversations, although Adventist representatives Heinz and LaRondelle go beyond traditional/popular views and Paulien is strong on dialogical bridge-building.

Adventists who may fear that doctrines may have been compromised, fundamental beliefs watered down, distinctive teachings betrayed, may relax. Nothing like this has happened. To the contrary, traditional views are affirmed. But to successfully communicate them, Adventists must learn to listen seriously, dialogue genuinely, and profit from the experiences/insights of others.

The report should prove useful to both Lutherans and Adventists who want to understand each other better.

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Secrets of Daniel: Wisdom and Dreams of a Jewish Prince in Exile

by Jacques B. Doukhan (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 2000; 191 pp.; paperback).

Reviewed by Winfried Vogel.

Based on his 1993 French publication on Daniel, the current book provides English readers Doukhan's deep understanding of the prophecies of Daniel. The author's Jewish heritage, his two doctorate degrees in Hebrew literature and in Old Testament interpretation, his teaching experience in Europe, Africa and the United States, and his skill in digging

deeply in Scripture (see his first work on Daniel, *Daniel: The Vision of the End*, 1987) eminently qualifies him to make this fine contribution to the understanding of Daniel.

Currently professor of Hebrew Old Testament exegesis and Jewish studies at Andrews University, the author provides a scholarly running commentary on much of the biblical text. At the same time, he is down to earth in his style of writing and provides a reader-friendly work. Just look at some of the chapter headings: "The Giant and the Mountain" (chap. 2) "Lions Under a Charm" (chap. 6), or "Requiem for a Messiah" (chap. 9). Even as he provides exegetical depths, he reaches out to a wider readership with fresh insights that makes Daniel relevant to Christian scholarship and life. He makes us aware of linguistic associations, such as the one between Daniel 1 and Genesis 1, thus heightening our awareness of the conflict between the Creator and the impostor, which throws new light on the theology of Daniel.

Doukhan is a scholar with a pastor's heart. He takes time to explain many Hebrew and Aramaic words and obscure al-

lusions, while providing deeper understanding of the text and its relationship to God's revelation in the biblical canon as a whole. His theological conclusions are based on the data of the biblical text. For example, he shows that the association of the ram and goat in Daniel 8 is a clear indication of Day of Atonement language, preparing the reader for the climax in verse 14.

Secrets of Daniel is a welcome contribution to the Adventist understanding of apocalyptic prophecy. Anyone who likes to be surprised even by well-known Scripture passages will not only thoroughly enjoy reading this book but also gain a spiritual blessing.

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Action Report

Maranhão Mission in Brazil holds three seminars for university students

Youth Ministries and the Association of Adventist University Students of the Maranhão Mission, in Brazil, sponsored in 2000 the third round of seminars for Adventist university students. The seminars theme, "The Science of Salvation," was drawn from Ellen White's statement: "Let the science of salvation be the burden of every sermon, the theme of every song. Let it be poured forth in every supplication" (*Evangelism*, p. 185).

The first seminar took place in May in the auditorium of Maranhão State University, Caxias Campus, and brought more than 200 attendants, with the participation of pastor Rainier Sales.

The second seminar was held in October also at Maranhão State University, Imperatriz, for the university students of Southern Maranhão. Dr. Zenilda Botti Fernandez, from the Federal University of Para, spoke to 120 attendants about spiritual knowledge as the

core understanding that Christians must have in order to resist materialism, hedonism, and other misguided approaches to life.

The third seminar was held in the same month, at the Adventist Secondary School in the city of São Luís, with 100 students. The featured speaker was Dr. Fadel Basile, who leads the Science and Religion Group in Belem. Lectures and discussions covered topics such as cosmology, the origin of life, the creation of human beings, and the Flood—all approached from a biblical perspective.

The seminars achieved their main objectives: (1) to highlight the spiritual and moral values conveyed in the Bible; (2) to study how biblical Christianity and science, properly understood, can be harmonized; (3) to show the church's love and support for Adventist university students; (4) to encourage the students' role as Christ's ambassadors on the university campus; (5) to elect the leadership of the Association of Adventist University Students of Maranhão and plan its future activities.

—Otimar Gonçalves

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East Tanzania Field university students hold a retreat at Dar-es-Salaam

Adventist college and university students from all over the East Tanzania Field converged in Dar-es-Salaam to hold their annual retreat, April 12-16, 2001. The meeting was held under the theme "Hastening His Second Coming" and included inspiring messages by Bernard Mambwe, president of the field, Mika Musa, guest speaker, and Christopher Mwashinga, Jr., youth and campus ministries director.

Participants presented reports on campus evangelism, discussed papers pertaining to their student life, and provided uplifting singing. During the last evening of the retreat, they displayed their artistic gifts in a talent night program, to the glory of God.

The students of the East Tanzania Field welcome contacts with other Adventist student associations and pray for the academic success and faithful witness of their members around the world.

—Christopher Mwashinga, Jr.

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Adventist university students meet in Imperatriz, Maranhão, Brazil.



Students' retreat in Tanzania.

Free at last!

by Joe Jerus

My escape from the world of the occult

The night was cool. A gentle breeze reminded me that fall would end soon. I had lived in this house since my birth, 17 years earlier. I knew its every nook and corner. My bed was familiar. Nothing fancy, nothing new, but this night would change my life forever. For some weeks now, an inner glow had accompanied me everywhere I went. This glow came from my recent discovery of Jesus and the Advent hope. As a newly baptized Seventh-day Adventist, I was enjoying every moment of this journey of faith. Bible studies, prayer, reading of devotional literature, and a new life in the Spirit had brought a peace of mind that I had not experienced before.

But this night in 1961 was to be so different. I had just finished reading about the dangers of modern-day spiritualism in *God Speaks to Modern Man*, a then-popular Adventist book. I went to bed with mixed emotions: faith in a God who loves and cares for His children, and fear that we live in a world where Satan carries on a real battle against those who love God. As I lay on the bed, stories of my grandmother who had died eight years before I was born flashed through my mind. Stories that my mother told me. My grandmother, so I learned, had extraordinary gifts. She could speak with the dead and foretell the fortunes and misfortunes of many. She had psychic powers and served as a minister of a spiritualistic church.

As a boy, I paid little attention to these stories. But now, with my new relationship with Jesus and my understanding of the battle that Satan wages in the world, I was distraught. The

awareness that I was living in the same house where my grandmother, a practicing spiritualist medium, lived, sent a chill down my spine. Would the evil spirits thwart my newfound joy? I prayed, turned off the light, and went to sleep. But not for long. In the middle of the night I woke up in a cold sweat. I heard some whirring sounds. I felt as if someone was physically assaulting me. I couldn't move or speak. Was this a dream? Perhaps a nightmare? No, my physical feelings of being semiconscious were real. My mind was alert, and I knew I had to rely not on my strength, but on the power of the Holy Spirit. With all the inner strength I could gather, I repeated in my mind some of the great Scripture promises and called upon my God to deliver me from this attack. Suddenly, the attack ceased and I experienced peace, knowing that God had protected me.

That night's battle assembled many pieces of the puzzle for me, and I began to see the reality of the warfare between Christ and Satan. As long as I did not know the Lord and His saving faith, no evil spirit bothered me. I had not paid much attention to the stories about my grandmother or even the involvement of my mother in the spirit world. My mother, too, was an occult practitioner who spoke of seeing "ghosts" and "spirits." She said she studied "divine science" and had premonitions about the death of certain people she knew in our small town. Often she was right. She claimed that a spiritualist healer had cured her of ulcers and gallstones. My sister, 10 years my senior, was supposed to have been healed of lockjaw in her

childhood by a spirit medium. My mother loved to use the ouija board with her spiritualist friends. She spoke of some of her relatives who also consulted with spirit mediums.

I had dismissed all these as superstitions. As I entered my teenage years, I wanted to understand the truth about God revealed in the Scriptures. I wanted to know God personally. I knew many Bible stories that I learned as a child in the Methodist church in our little town in northern Illinois. But I really did not know God. One day, I watched Billy Graham on TV explain the meaning of coming to Christ. I confessed my sins and made a commitment to God, but still I did not know what it meant to live a Christian life. I had many questions about God, Jesus, salvation, and life.

Through a set of unusual circumstances, I enrolled in the Voice of Prophecy Bible correspondence course. I was 15 then, and soon began studying the Bible with a local Adventist pastor, Gordon Shumate. He cleared up the cobwebs in my thinking regarding the Trinity, Christ's divinity, the Second Coming, and salvation by grace. In the fall of 1961, as a senior in high school, I was baptized an Adventist.

Satan's assault continued as I matured in Christ.

However, the mid 1960s were an unusual time in the United States. Eastern mysticism and occult practices invaded American intellectual, social, and spiritual life as never before. Thousands of young people began experimenting with drugs and cultic practices and started rejecting Christian values. Med-

itation and mantras became the fashion of the young. My sister came under the influence of this cultural shift through what seemed like a simple game—the ouija board. Through this she communicated with our dead “relatives.” The ouija has the English alphabet and the numbers zero through nine, with “yes,” “no,” and “goodbye” printed in large black letters. It comes with a plastic pointer with soft felt tips, which at times is moved by the spirits to letters and numbers that spell out messages.

Christmas 1967, I visited my sister. As soon as I arrived at her home, she wanted me to see the ouija board perform. I told her I would be willing if I could ask it the first question. As my sister and her daughter began to play with the board, our “deceased relatives” began to speak through it. I immediately told the spirits to stop and said, “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, who are you?” I expected the board to spell out the word “devils,” but instead it boldly wrote “Lucifer.” I asked how many angels had fallen, and the board replied one-third. I asked other questions to expose its true identity to my sister. Its answers agreed with the biblical portrait of Satan and his demons.

The spirits working through the board became very angry with me. They threatened my life. The pointer upon which the fingers of my sister and niece were placed came off of the board and began to poke at my stomach with force. I asked the spirits to quote John 8:12, where Jesus said, “I am the light of the world...” but they adamantly refused. I placed a Bible upon the board. They quickly pushed it off and began to swear profusely. I thought my exposure of them could help my sister become interested in the Bible. Instead, she said I was projecting my thoughts onto the board. In retrospect, I wish I had never tried that experiment. But the Lord pro-

tected me from my immature adventure.

The experience of that frightful night of 1961 repeated itself often as I entered college. Two or three times a week the battle would be waged in the middle of the night with a fierceness that left me weak. Even through my early years of married life with Nancy, the struggle continued. I dreaded going to sleep. Often I left the lights on for fear the spirits would return.

Finally, relief came in 1975, when I discovered a new book on spiritual warfare, *The Adversary*, by Mark Bubeck. The book offered biblical as well as practical guidance. It was written for those who had participated in the occult or grew up in homes involved in spiritism and felt threatened by demonic oppression. The book suggested “spiritual warfare praying” by claiming full authority of Jesus. Here is an example of one such prayer:

“Dear Lord and heavenly Father, I enter by faith into the full power and authority of my Lord’s resurrection. I desire to walk in the newness of life which is mine through my Lord’s resurrection... I bring the mighty truth of my Lord’s victory over the grave against all of Satan’s workings against your will and plan for my life. The enemy is defeated in my life because I am united with the Lord Jesus Christ in the victory of His resurrection.”

Nancy and I began to pray such prayers, saturated with Scripture. We were not repeating just words, but intentionally and prayerfully experiencing the power of the risen Lord. He is our victory, and we were claiming that victory as our own. As a result, I began to feel a new sense of freedom. I was no longer fearful of what the enemy could do to me. I now could go to motels alone and enjoy normal sleep without any attacks and without leaving the lights on. This didn’t mean the war was over. The Christian soldier must con-

stantly guard heart and mind and be alert to the twisted strategies of our common enemy, the devil.

My victory remains total because of the abiding presence of my Saviour in me. I have walked away from the world of the occult because of the love of my Lord. For the past 27 years, in peace and thankfulness, I have been able to minister for my Lord as a campus chaplain, sharing my hope with hundreds of young people.

What did I learn from my struggles? Is there something you can learn from my experience? Here it is:

1. *Remember the struggle with Satan is real.* Satan is at war with the saints of God. The closer you are to God, the more He is desirous of getting you on his side. Spiritual warfare is real, and we need to be watchful (Ephesians 6:12-14).

2. *Do not indulge in any of Satan’s spiritistic activities even for fun.* Be it the ouija board or cult music or mystical meditation, keep as far away from them as possible. Occult tools are dangerous (Isaiah 8:19).

3. *Be totally committed in your Christian experience.* Make your Christianity real. Know your Bible. Pray. Claim the victory of Christ in all that you do, and let God be your constant companion. Put on the armor of Christian warfare that Paul describes in Ephesians 6:12-14. Without identifying with the victory of Christ, we have no hope of victory.

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