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DIALOGUE

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**Time, faith, and fossil
whales**

**Can reality be
understood without God?**

**The mind-body
connection**

I know in whom I believe

Wine for my health?

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Volume 16

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EDITORIAL

You are poetry in motion!

It is said that before beginning an important commission, the great sculptor, painter, architect, and poet Michelangelo traveled to the Carrara quarries in northwestern Italy and personally chose the block of marble from which he was going to craft the work of art. He even oversaw the laborious transport of the white block to his studio, all the while designing in his mind the contours of the statue that his chisel would carve out.

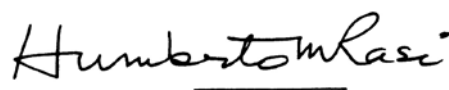
Centuries earlier, in his letter to the believers in Ephesus, the apostle Paul had written a powerful passage concerning God's creative work in the life of a Christian: "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10, NIV). Significantly, the original Greek word for "workmanship" is *poieo*. This word refers to the creation of a skilled artist. In fact, the key phrase in this passage could be translated as "we are God's poem." Just think about it!

There's no one quite like you. In the very beginning, humans were brought into being by a creative act of God—not as the result of a chance interaction of blind natural forces. Each of us is unique; and in spite of our sinful condition, we still bear the image of the One who made us. When we come to God seeking forgiveness and a new life through Jesus, He re-creates us, transforming our will, our affections, and our purposes. This miraculous change is freely offered and must likewise be freely accepted. As God extends His merciful hand to us, we must grab hold of it in order to be lifted up.

God has prepared good works for us to do. Once we experience the new birth in Christ, we are empowered to do good. Paul is crystal clear in this—our good works are not the *means* by which we earn salvation, but the spontaneous *result* of our having been rescued. As the rosebush produces roses and the apple tree apples, unselfish actions are a natural outgrowth of the new-born Christian's life. The Master Artist has re-created us with a purpose—to plan and act for the benefit of others. And it is God who offers opportunities and motivates us to use our talents, abilities, and skills to this end.

We can choose to do good. In all this, God respects our individuality and our will. He does not force Himself or His plans on us, but graciously invites us to become His hands and feet—His instruments of mercy in the world. The Holy Spirit moves us to act. Our positive words can transform the tense atmosphere of an office. Our caring can change the sharp competitiveness of a classroom. Our loving actions can transform and bring together alienated friends and families. Indeed, "the strongest argument for the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian" (Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 470).

The Master Artist has already acted. The stage is set. Opportunities to do good are available all around us, every day. Will you and I now choose to act as His new creatures wherever we may be?



Humberto M. Rasi, *Editor-in-Chief*

This international journal of faith, thought, and action is published three times a year in four parallel editions. (English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish) by the Committee on Adventist Ministry to College and University Students (AMiCUS) of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

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LETTERS

Getting more interesting

On behalf of the entire membership of the Nigeria Association of Adventist Students (NAAS), I wish to express our gratitude to the publishers and editors of *Dialogue*. Whenever I meet with fellow university students, I hear words of commendation for its content. "*Dialogue* contributes to my spiritual growth," stated one. "My relationship with my spouse is improving thanks to one of the articles published in the journal," noted another. "Kudos to *Dialogue*! It seems that the magazine is getting more interesting with each new issue" was another comment. Although we don't receive all the copies we need, I believe that God is using *Dialogue* to minister to the spiritual and intellectual needs of Adventist university students.

Sati Satmer Dapel
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Reading borrowed copies

While taking a master's degree at a public university in the Philippines, I have been reading borrowed copies of *Dialogue* from friends who had also borrowed them from others. Very few issues of the journal reach us, so we

consider them precious. The articles help a lot in the spiritual growth of students like me; they are a true blessing for us.

Arvel L. Huilar
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Just what I was looking for

I am an accounting student at a public university, and during a youth convention I was given a copy of *Dialogue*. What a pleasant surprise! The topics addressed, the personal stories, and the possibility of networking with other Adventist university students are just what I was looking for. Thank you!

Flor Elena López
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Encouraged to live and share my faith

There are times in which I feel almost overwhelmed by the secular and naturalistic philosophies presented by many of my professors and fellow students at the public university where I'm pursuing a degree in geography. But then I receive *Dialogue* and as I read its thought-provoking articles,

interviews, and personal testimonies, I am encouraged to live and share my faith. Where can I get copies of earlier issues of the journal?

Anderson Luiz Marotti
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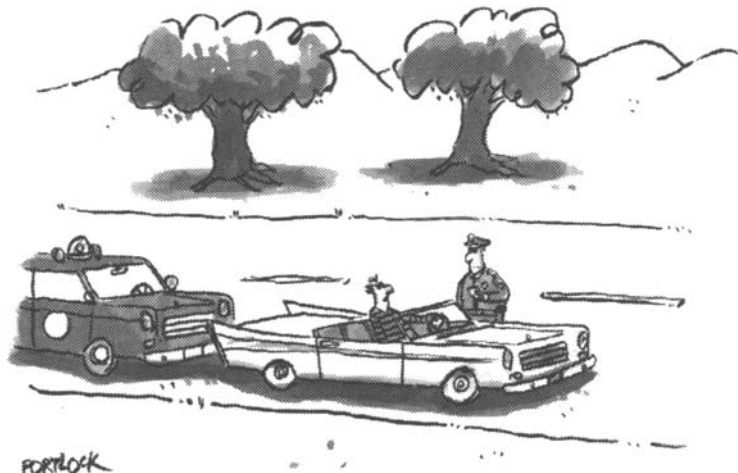
The editors respond:

Thank you, Anderson, for your positive comments. You can now read the best articles from earlier issues of Dialogue by logging onto its website: <http://dialogue.adventist.org>. Enjoy!

Useful articles

You are to be commended for the useful articles that you select for publication in *Dialogue*. Together with some of my fellow students, we have organized an Adventist student association at this public university. Through a public evangelistic campaign on campus, we have connected with students interested in studying the Bible. We also share with them some of the excellent articles included in *Dialogue*.

Daniel Mendoza
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"I was fleeing sin. I Timothy 6:11."

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Time, faith, and fossil whales

by Raúl Esperante

The occurrence of well-preserved fossils exposes serious shortcomings of the commonly accepted assumption of a long chronology among evolutionists.

Time has been a big issue in most controversies related to science and faith since the first non-biblical models for the origin of the earth and its organisms were proposed in the early 19th century. Geologists and naturalists like Hutton, Lyell, and others saw long periods of time in many features in the geological record, including the deposition of sedimentary layers, cooling of igneous rocks, and succession of fauna and flora in past times. Darwin and Wallace were apparently successful in linking evolutionary lineages in organisms with long periods of time during which death of the weakest and survival of the fittest gave way to more complex, intricate, and adapted organisms. If changes (both in the biological and the geological realms) happen at the rate we see today, then Earth and life must be very old for the accumulated changes to bring forth new forms. This circular reasoning is reiterated by the concise expression “the present is the key to the past.” Long eras were further supported by the development of radiometric techniques in the mid-20th century, which allowed the calculation of decay rates of unstable elements present in igneous rocks.

A whale of time?

Over the past five decades, several techniques have been refined that repeatedly yield consistent ages of hundreds of thousands or millions of years. Carbon 14 (C-14) is widely known as yielding ages ranging from hundreds to 50,000 years, although the accuracy of

the older ages is highly disputed. Series of unstable elements and their daughter products such as K/Ar (Potassium/Argon), U/Pb (Uranium/Lead), and Rb/Sr (Rubidium/Strontium) are commonly utilized to date older rocks and the fossils therein.

Radiometric dating is problematic for those who believe in the Genesis creation account because it sets the clock long before the time inferred from the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 and Ellen White’s statements, which indicate that humankind has been on Earth for about 6,000 years. Indeed, radiometric dating is the major challenge that young-Earth creationists face as scientists, and many Christians believe that the scientific evidence is strong enough to challenge the validity of the biblical assertions regarding Creation, and therefore choose to believe in alternative models such as progressive creation or theistic evolution.¹ Many go so far as to question the validity of the New Testament statements about Creation, including those by Jesus, Paul, and Peter. Consequently, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has taken special interest in scientific and biblical research that support the Creation story and the Flood. A number of scientists and biblical scholars endeavor to unravel the mysteries of time locked in the rocks and in the biblical genealogies, in order to bring light into the current controversy between science and Scripture.

Although radiometric dates are commonly assumed among geologists to be reliable throughout the geological column, across basins and continents, it is also true that sometimes they are inconsistent with other geological and paleontological evidence. The time spans obtained by using unstable isotopes may be far longer than the actual time needed for deposition of the sedimentary beds and/or fossil formation and preservation. One



Whale WCBa-20. This whale was almost entirely preserved (just a few bones were missing) and well articulated. The baleen (not visible in the picture) was preserved on top of the left limb.

example of this is sedimentary beds that indicate rapid deposition of sediments and fossil turtles in the Bridger Formation, Wyoming. These turtles are inferred to have been accumulated and buried over long periods of time in a lake environment affected by occasional volcanic ash falls. However, research carried out by Loma Linda University paleontologist Leonard Brand and others has shown that the turtles more likely were rapidly buried by floods and volcanic ash in a short span of time.²

Time for the whales

Another example is the occurrence of fossil whales in diatomaceous siltstones and sandstones of the Pisco Formation in southern Peru. In this deposit, thousands of fossilized cetaceans have been found in sedimentary

layers deposited in an ancient shallow marine embayment, which are now up to 30 kilometers away from the coast. These fossils are being studied by a multidisciplinary team of geologists and paleontologists from the United States, Spain, Peru, and Italy who have found multiple layers of well-preserved fossils of baleen whales, dolphins, sea lions, turtles, penguins, and other creatures. But before we go into detail about these fossils, we need to say a few words about the processes modern whales undergo after death.

Whales are actively swimming, air-breathing marine mammals that usually have a high fat content. When a whale dies, its body may immediately sink (low-fat species) or float (high-fat species) for a certain amount of time until it eventually sinks to the sea floor. Soon after death, bacterial decay and scavengers descend on the carcass and remove the flesh and fat until the bones are exposed. These processes may take several months, depending on the size of the whale

and the fat content. A particular characteristic of many whales is that their bones are fat-rich (which helps with floatability), and that fat (also called blubber) is a source of food even long after the bones are clean of flesh. Modern observations of whale skeletons lying on the sea floor show that they are colonized by an abundant and diverse community of encrusting invertebrates like clams, snails, worms, crustaceans, etc., which settle on the bones and in the associated sea floor. They burrow into the sediment in search of nutrients that have leaked out of the decayed carcass, and bore into the bones to feed on the blubber. It is believed that these skeletons may hold a large community of small marine invertebrates for many years.³ The bones of these sunken whales are usually corroded, disarticulated, and sometimes removed by the action of water currents and/or scavengers. If the skeleton has been washed onto the beach, it is likely that the bones will become very scattered by the action of

waves and storms.

In comparison to modern examples, what we see in the fossil whales of the Pisco Formation presents a rather different picture, although some similarities apply. Some skeletons appear partially or totally disarticulated as is the case with modern counterparts, but the bones are associated and clustered, indicating that little disturbance of bones occurred before burial. A large number of skeletons are entirely articulated with bones in life position. This feature clearly indicates rapid burial. Since the sediments were laid down in shallow water (<100 m depth), abundant mollusks, crustaceans, and worms would have bored into the bones in the attempt to feed on the blubber inside, had they been resting on the sea floor for many years. Also, water currents could have moved some bones. Instead, the preservation of the bones is excellent, with no evidence of damage by water currents, burrowing, and/or scavenging by invertebrates. Furthermore, there is no evidence of any invertebrates buried with the whale bones. It seems as though there was not enough time for the invertebrates to colonize the bare bones and leave their marks on them.

What is it even more striking is the preservation of baleen (the filtering apparatus) and, in a few cases, the mineralization of the spinal cord, because both are soft tissues and tend to detach and decay much faster than bone. Baleen is made of keratin (the same kind of tissue that makes up hair and nails) and is not rooted into the whale's mandible, but only glued to it by means of the gums. It is known from modern observations that the baleen detaches from the upper mandible in a matter of a few hours or days after death, making preservation of the skeleton along with its feeding apparatus extremely unlikely, unless very rapid sedimentation occurs. Surprisingly, numerous fossil whales in the Pisco Formation have been found with their baleen preserved, and many

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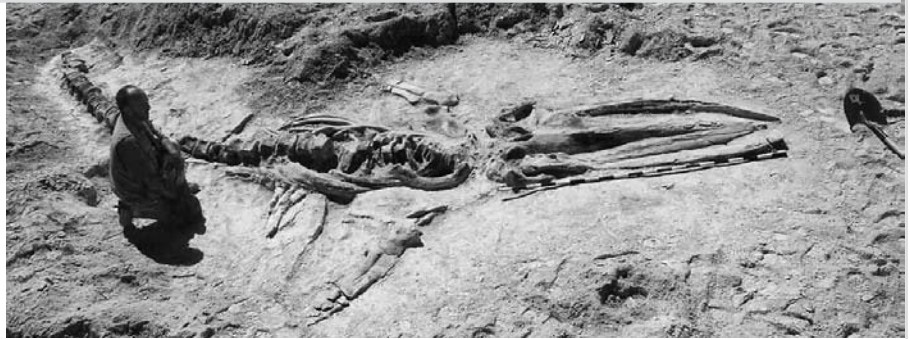
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of them with this filtering organ in life position. The conditions of these fossil whales suggests rapid burial and fossilization.

Several other lines of evidence suggest that sedimentation rates in the Pisco Formation were much higher than those observed elsewhere in modern times and considerably higher than the ones inferred from radiometric dates available for the area.⁴ Radiometric dates obtained using K-Ar isotopes indicate a span of time of 10-12 million years for the deposition of the whale-bearing deposits, which have a thickness of up to 1000 m.⁵ Assuming 10 million years for the deposition of a whole sequence of 500 m thickness, it would take 20,000 years to accumulate 1 m of sediment thickness on the sea floor in that area. Studies carried out in several oceans indicate that rates of deposition in the present for sediments similar to the ones of the Pisco Formation are in the range of 2-260 cm/1,000 years (with averages of 15-50 cm/1,000 years, and 2-16 cm/1,000 years for the Peruvian marine platform), which are over an order of magnitude higher than the rates obtained from radiometric dates.

Therefore even with a modern average rate of sedimentation of 40 cm/1,000 years it would take a millennium to completely bury a 40-cm thick whale skeleton, to prevent any disarticulation or deterioration of the skeleton originated by the action of water currents, scavengers, or chemical reactions. It seems unreasonable to think that a large skeleton could rest on the seafloor for several centuries in shallow water without being disturbed by physical and biological agents that would cause disarticulation, burrowing, and removal of the bones. Even if the bones and baleen had undergone rapid mineralization after the death of the animal, it is unlikely that the carcass would have endured so long without any deterioration, let alone with baleen in living position.

The implications of these figures of



The author posing next to whale WCBa-23.

rates of sedimentation of fine deposits on the seafloor are twofold. On the one hand, the excellent preservation of the fossil whales indicates that in the Pisco Basin sediment accumulated much faster in the past than at the present in similar geologic settings (such as the shallow ocean along the Peruvian coast, which is a good example of this kind of depositional setting). Certainly the sediment containing fossil whales must have been deposited very rapidly. As more of this type of evidence accumulates, it calls into question radiometric dating because there is not enough sedimentary activity to occupy such a long period of time.

On the other hand, the occurrence of these well-preserved fossils exposes serious shortcomings of the commonly accepted assumption among evolutionist geologists that "the present is the key to the past." If, as we have seen with modern whales, the rate at which processes occurring today (i.e. sedimentation and burial, in oceans and lakes) do not satisfactorily explain the occurrence of finely preserved fossils, we need to conclude that the past must have been very different in some way.

More research and study need to be done to ascertain why radiometric dating methods yield long ages as opposed to the catastrophic, rapid changes inferred from many paleontological features. Currently evolutionary geology explains the fossil record as the result of slow processes and change

occurring over long periods of time. However, an increasing number of rock formations and fossil occurrences previously interpreted within such an evolutionary framework must be reinterpreted as the result of rapid, or even catastrophic, processes operating on a different time scale.

Things may have been different in the past.

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1. These two models are indeed similar in their assumptions. While theistic evolutionists believe that God created the first organic molecules, cells, or simple organisms, and let them naturally evolve to more complex beings, progressive creationists suggest that God was active in creating new forms of life along this long evolutionary path.
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Can reality be understood without God?

by Clifford Goldstein

Human search may take many contours—between the subjective and the real, the known and the unknown, the mind and the senses—but finally it must stand in awe at the Cross!

“The world,” said Arthur Schopenhauer, “is my idea.”¹

If it’s Arthur’s idea, then it’s yours, and your bitterest foe’s too. What one knows, according to Schopenhauer, is “not a sun, and not an earth, but only an eye that sees a sun, a hand that feels the earth; that the world which surrounds him is there only as idea—that is, only in relation to something else, the one who conceives the idea, which is himself.”² And because we are different eyes, different hands, different consciousness, we know different suns, different earths. If the world is an idea, then the world is a different idea for each of us.

This question, about what’s real as opposed to what’s perceived, stretches back at least to Plato’s cave, that musty old den in which all humans were chained facing the back wall, and so all reality approached them as nothing but shadows on that wall cast by a fire behind their backs.

Only through philosophical and rational education, argued Plato, could anyone escape the cave and ascend into the world of sunlight, that is, reality as it truly is. However apt (or crude) Plato’s metaphor, what if indeed we could slip out, and get behind appearance, sensation, and phenomena in order to explore reality as it is in itself without the innate human filters that color and package it for us as appearance and phenomena—what would there be? What does the elusive thing-in-itself look like, feel like, smell like,

taste like. All we know of reality, even that that arises from pure reason alone, comes to us only as neuro-electrical-chemical processes that ignite quietly within a soggy darkness covered by skin and skull.

Even if it were possible to slip out, climb over, and get behind appearances to perceive reality, how could we perceive it with anything but senses—and senses, of any kind, always have biases and limits in their preconceptions? Whatever sensors connect us to what’s outside us, whatever devices interface us with the world, each has its own focus, slant, and boundaries. Different combinations create different realities. How, then, can reality be anything more than the subjective, limited senses perceiving it—which means, then, that reality would have to be all in our heads, nowhere else.

Reality and divine Mind

Perhaps, only if there were a being, some divine Mind that could view all things from every possible perspective and every possible position at the same time, could objective reality even be said to exist? Can, as Bishop George Berkeley argued, something really be anything, that is, have innate characteristics or qualities not ultimately in a mind perceiving them because what, ultimately, are characteristics or qualities (hot, cold, red, yellow, sweet, sour, hard, soft) other than sense impressions? How can sense impressions exist without a mind to sense them? How can there be pain without nerves, or taste without sensors? Without a divine Mind, does it make sense to even talk about what’s truly out there because otherwise what’s out there is only subjective, fluctuating, and oftentimes deceptive sense impressions, nothing more?

Can there be true morality (or true reality) if all morality (or reality) exists only as electrical and chemical reactions in subjective minds? We intuit that morality exists independent of us; otherwise, how can murdering babies

only because they’re Jewish be immoral if every human mind thinks otherwise? We intuit, even more so, that reality exists independent of minds; otherwise is Mount Everest non-existent if no mind perceives it? But how can moral and ontological absolutes exist if both morality and existence are found only in minds, not outside them?

The implications of these questions have been debated for centuries. British empiricist John Locke argued that if human knowledge arises only from experience, then how can we know anything of itself? Knowledge can go no further than experience. Nothing exists in the intellect, he wrote, that was not first in the senses, and because what’s in the senses is always limited, contingent, and in flux, we’re left with little real knowledge of the world.

Pushing his own empiricist presuppositions further, George Berkeley articulated his famous formula, *esse est percipi* (“To be is to be perceived”), claiming that qualities and characteristics of things, even their most primary qualities (such as extension), don’t have existence outside of the mind, and that only as an object is perceived can it be said to exist. “For what are the forementioned objects [houses, mountains, rivers] but things we perceive by sense?”—he wrote—and what do we perceive besides our own ideas or sensations? and is it not plainly repugnant that any one of these, or any combination of them, should exist unperceived?”³ Because reality appears only as sensation to us, there’s no sensation (hence no reality) without perception. Bishop Berkeley was not denying that these things are there; instead, he was saying that when something is said “to exist,” it means only that it is perceived by a mind.

Kant:

Noumenon and phenomenon

Assuming the reality of a priori synthetic propositions, upon which he based his revolutionary philosophy,

Immanuel Kant argued that the mind itself construes reality. Not that it creates reality, but that due to pre-existing structures within them, our minds synthesize and unify reality not according to the world itself, but according to each mind. The mind imposes itself upon the world, which appears only as organized, filtered, and categorized by mind. Mind doesn't conform to the world; world conforms to the mind. Our brains don't change the world-as-it-is (Kant wrote long before the Quantum revolution), but the world-as-it-is comes to us only as our brain allows.

A person looking at a mountain through binoculars will see something different than someone looking at it through a microscope. The mountain is there, for sure; what we see depends on whether our mind works like a microscope, or like binoculars, or like a pair of human eyes. Unlike the later phenomenalist idealists (such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte), who would do away with all reality other than what exists in our minds, Kant didn't reject the *noumenon*, that is, reality independent of human cognition. The *phenomenon* (how reality appears to us) can't exist without noumena (how reality really is) any more than pain can exist without nerves. What Kant asserts, instead, is that we can never know noumena, the real world, for what it is in itself. An impenetrable, dark divide hangs between what's there and how it finally appears as reality in our consciousness.

None of these philosophers, and none of their philosophies, have remained uncontested. Nevertheless, it's hard to argue against the basic point: The limits of knowledge, especially knowledge that comes through sensory perception alone. Writing against the maxim that "A man is the measure of all things," Plato said that if all that were requisite for truth were sensation, then a "pig or a dog-faced baboon" would also be the "measure of all things."

Plato's point is that reality can't be measured and judged only by human standards because different people measure and judge reality differently, even contradictorily. The argument that there's no objective reality apart from the senses—though defensible with some logical and rational rigor—remains intuitively unconvincing, particularly to someone who barely survived going headfirst through a windshield. He knows something real, solid, objective in-and-of-itself exists outside of himself.

From Plato's cave to Kant's epistemological pitch, the question remains, What else is out there? What else moves, exists, and lives across the gap between the narrow, finite spectrum of appearances in human minds, and the wide, infinite spectrum of the real? Like high-pitched sounds that only dog's ear's catch, or sounds and particles just as real as soccer balls and Bach cantatas, what else exists as noumena that we just can't sense, see, feel, or intuit?

Dimensions beyond space and time

Scientists talk of other dimensions beyond space-time; a few branches of physics demand them (superstring theory calls for at least 10). Some mathematicians argue that pure numbers exist in an independent "reality" distinct from our world of sense perception. Others have argued that the supernatural, the occult, the realm of faith, of angels, of the preternatural, and the realm of raw good and evil apart from the contingencies and limitations of humanity exist in the noumenon. The author of the New Testament book of Hebrews wrote that "the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Hebrews 11:3, KJV). The apostle Paul talked about realities "that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible" (Colossians 1:15). What are those things that do not appear? What are those invisible realities, if not

so much in heaven but on Earth?

Kant's distinction between the phenomenon and the noumenon, though not proving the presence of the supernatural, has at least provided a room for it. He forged, if nothing else, a feasible metaphysic abode, a place where the supernatural could exist. A million cell phone calls buzzing about us imply the possibility—not the probability—of other intangibles, too (angels, maybe?). The first shows that intelligent, purposeful activity can function all around us, yet remain beyond us, even when it impacts us. (Who, for instance, smelled, heard, saw, tasted, or touched the high levels of radiation that destroyed their intestinal linings, weakened their immune systems, and killed them?).

Noumenon matters, in more ways than one, and all the time, too. Phenomenon is, perhaps, nothing but the corner of noumenon that mind rubs against and absorbs, like a soggy dark sponge. That we don't touch all of it doesn't mean we don't touch some; that we can't know it fully doesn't mean we can't know it partially. In Exodus, when Moses asked God, "Now show me your glory" (33:18, NIV), God replied, "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." And then said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen" (Exodus 33:2-23). Maybe that's all the phenomenon is, the back, not the face, of the noumenon.

Mathematicians have encountered incredible coherence and beauty in the world of numbers. Mathematics seems to be "out there," not as physical structures but rather as precise and delicate relations between non-extended, pre-existing entities more permanent and firm than the material world. However highly processed by the brain, some-

thing's still there, something these mathematicians encounter as realities that appear more consistent, reliable, and stable than the fleeting, vacillating, and ersatz vagaries of phenomenon. Three kilos of rice, no matter how accurate the scale, will always be more or less than three kilos (even if off by only a few molecules); however, the number three, as a number alone, is absolute, refined, and pure, with no need of any refining.

Thus, whether as concept or sensation, something of the noumenon does get through, even if feels like phenomenon. We're made, as it were, to interact with noumenon, or at least part of it. There's a comfortable harmony, a convenient, even aesthetically pleasing concord between our senses and the portion of reality that enters our consciousness.

How fortunate that we can view the part of the electro-magnetic spectrum cast by the star closest to our eyes in a way that not only allows us to see objects but also to see them so beautifully. Is there any logical, necessary, or even practical reason for sunsets or peacocks to be portrayed so pleasantly in our minds? Whatever the thing-in-itself that rises from mint, how nice that by the time it goes through the nose it is sensuous fragrance in the mind. Whatever an orange (or a peach, or a plum, or a grape) is in-and-of-itself, it not only so lusciously and tastefully interacts with our mouths but also comes saturated with chemicals and nutrients that just happen to harmonize with our physical needs.

Of course, the same devices that project good and pleasure into our consciousness do the same with evil and ugliness. The sunset that drains incandescent puddles of light from the horizon also leaves behind a cold wake of those crouched and quivering in unfriendly doorways. However luscious a grape, or tasty an apple, famine and pestilence often break them down before the human belly does. And that belly also provides lush ground

for rapacious tumors. Thus, however inherently good the phenomenon, evil often soils the package.

Evil: After the fact

Evil, however, is after the fact, and the fact itself—as pure fact—is good. St. Augustine, in *The City of God*, wrote that evil is a diminishing, a defection of the good. The good came first; evil followed. There is no efficient cause of evil, said Augustine, only a deficient one. What we call evil “is merely a lack of something that is good.”⁴

Like silence, like darkness, evil arises only from a lack, from a falling away. “Now,” Augustine continued, “to seek to discover the causes of these defections—causes, as I have said, not efficient, but deficient—is as if some one sought to see darkness, or hear silence. Yet both of these are known by us, and the former by means only of the eye, the latter only by the ear; but not by their positive actuality, but by their want of it.”⁵

Look closely... a rotted peach demands, first, the peach. There can be no sexual disease without, first, sex. And, behind the abused child exists only the child. The adjectives are secondary, unoriginal, after-the-fact intrusions, that are after the fact, and the fact itself, as pure fact, is good.

Children, peaches, sex—before any deficiency—reveal the creative touch of a tender, genteel love. Think of them, edited of all unintended adjectives; imagine the child, unmodified. However rudely deflowered, nature still can transcend parched logic and sprinkle us with hints of something more hopeful than cosmic entropy. Between what's in us (our senses) and what's out there (the sensed), the equations beautifully compute, the numbers work majestically, even if they have to be tallied in our hearts, not our heads.

Think for a moment on the biblical doctrine of incarnation. It's an incredible claim: God Himself incarnated

into humanity—the Creator of the universe assumed our flesh, and at the Cross He bore every evil adjective and adverb (and every evil verb and noun). And the weight of all that perfidy—its guilt, its consequence, its penalty—was enough to kill Him. God isn't immune to our pain or evil; on the contrary, they crushed out His life, as manifested in Jesus, at the Cross.

But if the Cross is true, it's true only because God loves us with a love that stretched across the cold expanses of infinity into the feverish recesses of our fearful, expiring lives. It said, too, that with issues so consequential, so terminal, God wouldn't have gone to the Cross without giving us reasons to believe that He did, and one of those reasons exists in the unmodified facts themselves. Imagine creation stripped of all its foul modifiers (and then imagine those modifiers falling, at once, on Jesus).

If someone cracked the glass and slashed Mona Lisa, would those gashes diminish the love Leonardo first put into the painted lady? There can be no famine without first the fields of wheat and corn. And what do the wheat and the corn say about the One who first wrapped their seed in the shell before water, dirt, air, and sunshine lifted the stalk out of the earth and covered it with sweet buds that toasted taste so good in our mouths and fit so snugly, and healthfully, in our cells?

Sure, lush fields of grain don't validate the moral argument for the existence of God, any more than the thick, sweet air over orchids vitiates a priori materialism. It's readily admitted that sunsets reveal the limits of logic and reason to know God's love. And even the child unmodified doesn't show that Christ died on the Cross. Don't read more into what's out there than what is. Don't read less, either.

“But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: Or speak

Continued on page 17.

The mind-body connection: Some recent findings

by Linda Caviness

Wholistic and healthful function is most likely when there is balance between mind, body, and spirit.

Disaster struck us without warning. Tad, our youngest son, had brought much joy to all of us. As we watched him grow, we had great hopes for his future. Though we had been concerned about his increased tripping and falling, we never suspected his condition was as serious as it turned out to be. After extensive tests, the doctors diagnosed his illness as Niemann Pick—a degenerative brain disease. Tad was 11. Little was known about this terminal disease, but I was determined to find everything I could. Even as the doctors tried to treat Tad, I took on the battle from a different angle. I wanted to relate to Tad's condition not just emotionally but intelligently, so as to make Tad feel as comfortable and cared for as possible. In desperation, I began to study brain anatomy and physiology. I wanted to probe the mysteries hidden within this mass of flesh that acts as the commanding center of Tad's life, activities, and hope. Brain science suddenly became a compelling focus in my life.

Tad died six years after his diagnosis, just before his 17th birthday. Though this tragic loss left a permanent void in our hearts, the venture into brain science became a catalyst for me to gain new insights on the brain/body relationship. I read every book and article I could lay my hands on. I attended brain conferences and seminars. I dissected the human brain in neuroanatomy lab. My role in teacher education grew to include knowledge of the neurobiology of learning. Now

I use this knowledge to help teachers to understand mind/body connections and facilitate learning.

This quest to learn about the brain also yielded a doctoral dissertation—a comparative analysis of two large bodies of education-relevant data: current educational brain research and Ellen G. White's 100-year-old counsels to educators. Though this study compared data from two seemingly dissonant philosophical perspectives—naturalism and theism—the comparison provided new insights about the integral link between mind and body. The study also led to a postulate conclusion: that an active, fractal-like construct (see sidebar) is operant in life processes and can be identified in the relationship between mind and body.

A dynamic, fractal-like triad

The pervasive theme that emerged from this comparative study is that a dynamic relationship exists among three major brain function components—cortical processing (higher-order thinking or conscious thought), physical stimulation, and emotional/social/spiritual¹ influence on brain and body function via neurochemistry. One hundred years ago, Ellen G. White referred to these three functions as “the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers.”²

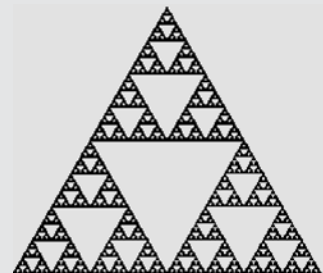
What is new about this ages-old triad construct is the scientific data substantiating and/or negating what merely has been speculated philosophically. Intuitively we have known that wholeness involves mind, body, and spirit. Now, with expanded knowledge about the brain and its relationship to the body, the concept of wholeness can be based on an even more objective perspective. With the aid of newly developed brain-imaging technology, we now can view the brain as it functions—not just engage in speculation based on external behavior.

Knowledge gained from new imaging techniques is further enhanced by increased knowledge about neurochemistry—a field that unites mind and body. Candace Pert's 1972 discovery of the opiate receptor opened the way for greater understanding of how chemicals inside our bodies form a dynamic information network, linking mind and body.³ Pert equates neurochemistry with emotion—the phenomenon that occurs as neuron communicates with neuron and produces attitudes, spirit, and action. Emotion influences all thought potential before it is processed in “higher-order” cortical areas as conscious thought.

How do new perceptions about the mind/body/spirit construct relate to

Fractals

Benoit Mandelbrot, a mathematician, introduced Fractal theory in the 1970s. A fractal is and contains a repeated pattern at varying levels of form and/or function in a given entity. This repetitious pattern of smaller units exemplifies the pattern of the whole unit. Whether the design is viewed microscopically or macroscopically, the pattern structure appears. The example of a fern is often used to describe a fractal in simple terms. Each of the smaller segments of the fern replicates the shape and pattern of the whole. The pattern not only is the whole, it also is seen as the constituent parts of the whole. (In this study of mind/body function, application of the term fractal is metaphoric and philosophical, not mathematical.)



fractal theory? Before providing that explanation, perhaps a bit of narrative will help to inform those unacquainted with the term fractal.

As a child, I spent hours with my father in small aircraft. From high above, the earth patterns in the undeveloped terrain below fascinated me. Years later, patterns seen from the airplane appeared again in quarter-inch slabs of cut rock on which I wrote verses and gave away as gifts. Later still, similar patterns were evident under microscopes in science lab or through telescopes while viewing galaxies and nebula far beyond the Earth's atmosphere. These fractal-like or repetitious patterns apparent in micro and macrocosms I had observed over the years became even more meaningful after I read Margaret Wheatley's *Leadership and the New Science* and became acquainted with fractal theory. Were these patterns in nature evidence of a grand plan of organization? Of Intelligent Design?

In my study of the brain, a repetitious mental construct also surfaced in the words of numerous specialists on the brain and learning as they described function at the neuronal level, within the brain itself as a functioning organ, and wholistically in the relationship between the brain and the body. Was this repetition evidence of additional fractal representation?

Clearly, researchers agreed that three major functions contribute to human reality—intellect, emotion, and physical activity. But had anyone else aligned brain study with fractal theory? A review of the literature confirmed the connection. Mercier, Bieberich, Fernandez, and others also discuss fractal function in a neuroscientific context.⁴

In comparing these large bodies of data, I began to see evidence of wholistic interplay between mind, body, and spirit—microscopically at the cellular level, anatomically in the organization of the brain itself, and overtly in the relationship between the brain and the

body. Let's look more closely at these three levels of form and function by starting first with the anatomical structure of the brain.

In the 1970s, when Paul MacLean proposed the *triune brain theory*, he described three levels of the brain—the cortex, the limbic center, and the brain stem/cerebellum. At that time, MacLean believed each of these areas functioned as a brain within the brain. Since then, however, MacLean has joined with others to adopt a different stance. Current thought suggests that each of these three areas functions as part of a dynamic whole. Each area is dependent on the other two as simultaneous and symbiotic processing takes place.

Though MacLean's original concept has changed, the three major areas he identified are still considered to be basic areas of the anatomical brain. Each area is multifunctional and is integrated functionally with the other two parts and their functions. These three areas continue to be identified with the major functions that take place in each area.

The brain as a fractal organ

The cortical area of the brain is commonly identified with higher-order thinking and conscious thought; the limbic center is associated with emotion, sensory input produced by the environment, and memory; while the brain stem and cerebellum conduct incoming and outgoing information to and from the muscles, organs, and other aspects of the physical body, as well as coordinate physical movements. In a sense, the cortex can be thought of as the mental component; the limbic area as the emotional/social/spiritual component; and the brain stem/cerebellum as the physical component.

The neuron as a fractal organ

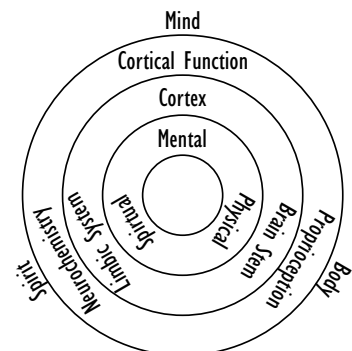
On a smaller scale, the mental/physical/spiritual fractal again is evident. The tiny neuron cell responds to neurochemical signals (emotional func-

tion), decides its response to the signal (mental function), and acts on this decision (physical function) through inhibition or transfer of the action potential. Not only does the neuron function in these three capacities, it pervasively influences and is influenced by these same elements. The cortex, the limbic area, and the brain stem/cerebellum are constantly affecting the neuron and are being affected by the function of the neuron.

Body/mind/spirit as a fractal organ

Looking at the body/mind from a larger perspective, the brain (mental) controls cognition, the body (physical) provides input to stimulate the brain to function, and neurochemistry (emotional/social/spiritual) is created by sensory stimulation—mostly from the environment, which activates neurochemicals to network or integrate the body and the brain. Without question, the interaction of body/mind/spirit affects its constituent parts. Is it also true that body/mind/spirit are affected by a broader representation of this postulated fractal?

There is abundant evidence that this fractal construct is functional in the environment that bathes the individual. Mental, physical, and spiritual influences not only surround us, they also contribute to the quality of our intellectual capacity, physical health, and emotional/social/spiritual condition and development. Consider the environmental impact among these three realities.



Mental stimuli in the environment

First, let's look at intellectual capacity. For centuries, the nature versus nurture debate has raged, and traditionally nature seems to have commanded the lead. The big question has been: Which determines intelligence—genetics (nature) or environmental influence (nurture)? New knowledge about enrichment and the brain's ability to change and grow now indicates that nature and nurture are about equal in determining cognitive ability. Environmental influences have much to do with turning on genetic functions that might otherwise remain latent.

Second, reigning philosophical influences also play a significant role in an individual's mindset. The belief system of parents has a powerful impact on the attitudes, habits, and relationships of their children. Even before the child has explicit memory of biographical happenings, caregivers implicitly shape his or her mental orientation in ways that are extremely difficult if not impossible to change. Schools further develop the beliefs and orientations of society. These mental impressions mold our lives and, to a large extent, determine our life functions.

Third, what we think others think about us has a profound impact upon our self-concept and resilience. A considerable amount of current research on stereotype threat suggests that, consciously and unconsciously, others' perceptions of us will determine our attitudes and performance. This phenomenon relates closely to the next consideration.

Emotional, social, spiritual stimuli in the environment

Emotional intelligence, a term popularized by Daniel Goleman in the 1990s, is now a well-rooted construct in educational theory, thanks to new knowledge about brain function. The role of emotion in cognition is undeniably profound. But emotion

plays a star role in other disciplines, as well. The entertainment world realizes huge profits through adept emotional appeal to audiences around the world. New fields of study—neurocardiology, neuroeconomics, neuropsychology, to name a few—also address this relatively new focus on emotion.

You may wonder how neuroscience relates to economics and emotion. Paul Zak of Claremont Graduate University explains that pleasure and choice drive the stock market. And trust is another significant factor. New research on trust suggests that when two people trust each other, oxytocin levels rise in each individual. Oxytocin is a hormone—a neurochemical—that produces relaxation. Receptor sites throughout the brain respond favorably to appropriate levels of this neurotransmitter, which also promotes bonding. What stockbroker wouldn't want a desirable client to bond professionally to him and subsequently to his firm?

Research on pheromones, heart-rate-variability signal transfer, and other emotional/social/spiritual influences also continues to provide information about the powerful role of neurochemistry in our environment. Not only does our own neurochemistry affect our surroundings, the environment impresses upon us in similar ways as well—consciously and unconsciously. Benefits from positive levels of emotion in the mind/body increase function of the immune system, the heart, respiration, and digestion.

Much research has addressed the effect of negative emotion on body/mind. Martin E. P. Seligman, former president of the American Psychological Association, describes how negative emotion can lead to clinical depression. In his search for ways to correct this tendency toward emotional imbalance, Seligman began collaborating with Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, author of *Flow*, a book about the value of peak motivational experience. Together they

advanced a focus on positive emotion.

University of Michigan's Barbara Fredrickson now specializes in psychophysiology and the effect of positive emotions on the mind and the brain. In an *American Scientist* article,⁵ Fredrickson cites research that suggests positive emotion promotes longevity, individual and collective functioning, psychological well-being, and physical health. She researches to find out "how and why 'goodness' matters."⁶

Negative emotions—anger, fear, sadness, etc.—are "distinctly different experiences" that signal specific autonomic responses that are evidenced in facial expressions. Positive emotions—joy, amusement, serenity, etc.—are "relatively undifferentiated" and "have no distinguishable autonomic responses." Negative emotion tends to move us toward survival action of some kind, while positive emotion helps us "solve problems concerning personal growth and development."⁷

Positive emotions promote physical, intellectual, and psychological/social health that endures "long after the positive emotion has vanished," Fredrickson suggests. This positive effect promotes resilience and optimism that may help to undo the harmful effects of negative emotion on mind and body.

"People who regularly feel positive emotions are in some respects lifted on an 'upward spiral' of continued growth and thriving." They "become more helpful to others," and can "transform communities into more cohesive, moral and harmonious social organizations."⁸

More than one hundred years ago, Ellen White offered related counsel. She counseled that when the human mind connects with the mind of God, the Holy Spirit takes residence in the heart. When that occurs, the effect of love has a powerful, beneficial influence on the mind and the body, she explains. Subsequently, an atmosphere forms around us that is beneficial to all who come near. Negative emotion, on

the other hand, is detrimental to self and to those near us.⁹

Emotion not only serves to transmit neurological data among neurons, within the brain, and between the brain and body; it also actively distributes to and influences the community around us. Research on positive emotion provides new meaning for the value of spiritual functions in maintaining mind/body health. Communal worship, trust in divine power, pausing for table grace before eating, shifting focus from self to the needs of others, etc., may be more beneficial than previously understood. Perhaps choices of this kind are innate tendencies toward a search for wholeness.

Physical stimuli in the environment

Physically, through sound, touch, taste, smell, and vision, the environment stimulates us to action as we attempt to survive and to thrive. Disequilibrium is a significant part of these processes in that it requires motion through exchange. An example will help to explain.

Dr. George Javor, a biochemist at Loma Linda University in California, suggests that living matter constantly tries to move toward balance. However, if it arrives at balance and remains there, life dissipates.¹⁰

Case Western Reserve University's James Zull claims that "movement is cognition expressed." Circuitry within

the cortical lobes naturally moves cognition repetitively from sensory integration to executive processing and ultimately toward action in the motor center of the cortex. Consequently, societal demands to work and to serve promote brain and body health.

Overlapping nature of environmental stimuli

Perhaps it has occurred to you that these three environmental influences are somewhat overlapping in nature. True to fractal theory, each component—mental, emotional/social/spiritual, and physical—does contain elements of the other two components.

Vital role of service

One hundred years ago, Ellen White promoted the idea that learning is a result of the "harmonious development of the physical, mental, and spiritual powers."¹¹ Further, she stated that this harmonious development "prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and the higher joy of wider service in the world to come." Service as a fourth component in cultivating human development is critical in wholistic function. As a disequilibrating force, it maintains healthful status.

Acquiring benefits educationally, relationally, and physically is vital; however, constantly taking in and not giving back again may truncate human potential. Like the Dead Sea, if we receive but do not altruistically

contribute to the community around us, stagnation and loss of potency may result. When the human unit—mind/body/spirit—is activated in benevolence toward the community of which it is a fractal part, the integrity of life substance is honored, and human potential tends to thrive.

Balancing the pyramid

Wholistic function is most likely to occur when we honor balance between mind, body, and spirit (see Figure A). Figure B shows how one part of the triad fractal can swallow up the other two and lead toward personal imbalance. A "squashed" fractal is likely to truncate potential. But when the three dimensions are balanced and this wholeness is channeled in loving service to others, our potential is achieved.

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Figure A: Balanced fractal

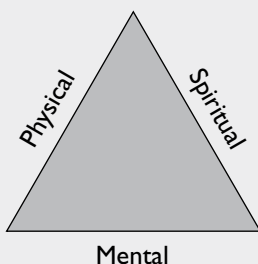
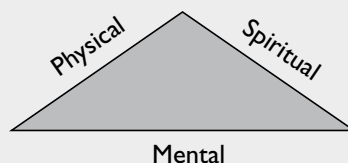


Figure B: Skewed fractal



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I know in whom I believe

by Niels-Erik Andreasen

How can we be certain about the God we worship?

In 1915 Ellen G. White died at the age of 87 at her Elmshaven home in Deer Park, California. The last words reported to have been uttered by this servant of God were: “I know in whom I have believed.”

How well do we know the God in whom we believe? The question is important and very personal. I believe that we can know God, but knowing God does not mean that we have Him figured out. Knowing God at the deepest personal level means that we feel safe in His presence and that we seek His company. Let me share three things I have come to know about God from my experience.

God is my Creator

First, I know God as my Creator. Creation is a strange, unusual, and marvelous event. Even the Bible admits it. Only God can create. He made the whole world by His word. We cannot make things that way. Creation is a miracle. It is just there before our eyes on page one of the Bible, with no introduction. In the beginning God created, it blurts out. No wonder many people, even some Christians, struggle to accept creation as a way of making the world and everything in it. There are just too many questions.

To help answer some of these questions, our church established the Geoscience Research Institute. I have participated in two of its field study tours. They were enjoyable and informative. Yet, they dealt mostly with evidences of a great, frightening catastrophe, the Flood. But in between the lectures, I had time to contemplate God’s world—the sea beneath and the stars above. I began to feel safe again in the presence of my Creator and to

seek His company more earnestly than before.

Consider yet another story of creation, this time from a child’s point of view. In Psalm 8:1-5 two people are talking—a father or mother and a child. Perhaps it was the psalmist, King David, and one of his children, Absalom or Solomon. They are walking on the roof of the palace one night. Looking up, the child asks: “Daddy, how many twinkling stars are there? And daddy, who put them there? Look, one is falling.” That is when the psalmist wrote: “From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise” (NIV). And further, “When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have established, what are human beings that you are mindful of them?” (NRSV) Notice the expression, “the work of your fingers.” To the psalmist God’s creative work is but finger work—simple, like child’s play.

Children know God instinctively because they have big curious eyes that are always looking up. They know what it means to feel safe in the presence of their parents, if they have good parents. Therefore, they teach us how to feel safe in God’s presence and how to seek His company.

But, you say, that is just too simplistic. We are not children any longer. How can we know our Creator without first having resolved every question about the world He created—questions about primate fossils found in Africa, about the ice ages in Scandinavia, about the geologic column, about dinosaurs, and so on.

I agree these are difficult questions, and quite frankly, I have not found satisfactory answers to all of them. But then I remember Psalm 8, and I think of a child standing at a street corner waiting to cross through heavy traffic. She reaches up to take the hand of her parent, and now she feels safe. That is how I relate to my Creator. There are questions and problems, of course.

There are mysteries in the world. But when we take His hand, we feel safe.

When we know God like this, we confess without hesitation or reservation: I believe in Father God, the Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. I know in whom I believe, I feel safe in the presence of my Creator, and I seek His company.

God’s will for my life

Second, I know God by accepting His will for my life.

God’s will for us is our welfare, and His will is revealed in His law. It sounds simple enough, and yet God’s will is a strange thing to many people. Some of us think of His will as strict, oppressive, legalistic, harsh, judgmental. For that reason even some Christians do not seriously seek to know and obey God’s will. Rather they attempt to avoid it so they can follow their own will.

Within the short history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I see two distinct phases in our teaching regarding God’s will and His law.

Phase one: Early on, without intending to, we managed to turn many of our people away from God’s will as revealed in His law. Ellen White spoke of that wrong emphasis in 1888, when she instructed us in the relationship between law and grace. At first we listened and changed, but then we forgot what we had learned.

We spoke about God’s law in the same breath as we spoke of God’s coming judgment, thereby frightening our listeners. Some of my students used to tell me: “If God is going to weigh my sins against His law in the judgment, I will not make it. I give up. I do not even want to hear of God’s law any more.” My assignment was to change their minds.

Phase two: Toward the end of the 20th century, as Adventists, we began to affirm once again God’s grace and righteousness by faith. We taught, properly, that grace precedes everything else in our relationship with

God, and that once we accept His grace, we will know Him and His will for us. But that wonderful discovery really did not reestablish the law of God as a guide in our lives. In fact, it seems that the law of God is spoken of much less now than before, but for a different reason—not because we are afraid of it, but because we set it aside and ignore its value.

Thinking of all this I have come to two conclusions. First, in all the judgment passages, especially in the prophets where this judgment is presented, God does not judge His people for failure to obey His law, but for failure to remain loyal to His covenant. Micah 6:6-8 speaks of Israel's failure and goes on to enumerate the many ways in which Israel might have been more obedient. "Should we offer more burnt offerings, oil, and sacrifices?" the people asked. "No," comes the answer from the Lord. "I only ask three things (vs. 8): Act justly, love mercy, and be humble, that is to say, be loyal to me." That is what God requires.

So I explained to my students that judgment is an important Bible teaching, but when our names come up in the heavenly court, the question God asks is not how good we have been, but how loyal we have been. That is what matters most to God. In fact, it is not our sins that get us into trouble with God on the judgment day, but it is contempt of court that puts us at risk with Him. As for our sin, God knows that we sin, but He has a remedy for sin—forgiveness (Micah 7:19). But what can God do with disloyalty on our part? What can He do when we turn our backs? That is what the judgment is all about: Did we turn our backs toward God in contempt of His court, or did we come boldly to His throne seeking His acceptance and forgiveness through Jesus Christ our friend and advocate? That is the meaning of loyalty in the judgment.

My second conclusion is that the law of God is intended to show us how to act and live more responsibly. God's

law consists of 10 commandments on two tablets. Let us begin with the easy part, the second tablet, which teaches us to relate to others. Do not desire the property of others—be content with what you have. Do not lie about your neighbor—tell the truth. Do not steal what belongs to others. Respect your friend's spouse—do not commit adultery. Do not commit murder—the life of another is not yours to take. "But how can we learn to live in harmony with these demanding prohibitions?" we ask. Here comes the answer in the one positive commandment on the second tablet, which points to the heart of all relationships: Honor your father and mother. That is where it all begins, at home with father, mother, and children. If things go right at home, then they will go right in the neighborhood, in the country, and between nations. God's will really is no mystery at all, and it is not frightening either. It begins with a good and safe home.

But, we ask, Who gave us these principles, and why should we pay attention? The answer is found on the first tablet—the four commandments dealing with our relationship with God. Not just anyone is the author of these commandments. They come from God and they are His will. Who is this God? Not just anyone. We cannot see Him, and don't even think of making a picture of God. Well, can I speak to Him? Yes, sort of, in prayer and meditation, but not by using His name in a common way. How then do we go about it, for we want to know this God and His will? That takes us to the corresponding positive commandment on the first tablet, the fourth. It contains a startling message: The law giver who sets such high ethical standards for us and asks so much of us, begins by giving us a gift—a day off, sacred time without work, a time to rest. That is the day on which we learn to know God in the safety of His presence. Once we catch the deep meaning of the fourth commandment,

all the previous questions are resolved. We know Him by feeling safe in His presence and by seeking His company on His day (Isaiah 58:13, 14).

God loves me

Third, I know God because He loves me.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have everlasting life" (John 3:16, NRSV). As a young person I was greatly impressed with the thought that our Lord and Saviour would give His life to save one sinner. Added to this is Paul's thought that it is perhaps understandable how someone might give his or her life for a friend, but Christ gave His life for us while we were still enemies (Romans 5:7, 8). We need to think carefully about the word *love*, especially since it expresses the third dimension of our knowledge of God.

First of all, God's love is not motivated by emotions or passions. His love is a principle. That is what we need to know about Him, and once we do, we feel safe in His presence and seek His company—that is, we love God back the same way. Some Christians develop merely an emotional, passionate love relationship with God. Our young members, even children, sometimes, get caught up in believing that Christianity is merely an affair of the heart. "Give your heart to Jesus," we instruct them when they are small. But will their love for God remain strong and steadfast as they grow up?

One of the saddest experiences I have had is to see young and not-so-young Christians replace their passionate love of God with a strong dislike of anything religious and Christian. The prophet Hosea also speaks of that experience when he, on God's behalf, complains that Israel's love is like the morning dew. It evaporates with the first rays of the morning sun (Hosea 6:4). So to clarify God's kind of love,

the prophet introduced a special word for love, *hesed*, which means love based on principle. This is often translated as “steadfast love,” or “covenant-keeping love,” or “lasting love.”

All of us have something to learn about God’s love. He loves us on principle but, unlike our love, His love never dulls. It remains warm and attentive always, even passionate, but principled. God is Someone who loves us always. He is Someone whose love is steady no matter the circumstances. He is Someone who loves so differently from the way even the most lovable among us love.

That is what Jesus explained to us in the parable of the lost son who returned to his father, his mother, and his brother (Luke 15). The Dutch painter, Rembrandt, portrayed the scene in a famous painting on display in the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia. Theologian Henri Nouwen wrote a book about that painting of the rebellious son that finally returns home. The single point in the parable, the painting, and the book is that God the Father loved this young man against all odds and He loved him with a mother’s love and with a father’s love. This unusual point is implied in Jesus’ parable where both parents—father and mother—played a role in loving their son back home. One covered him with a robe and the other prepared him a home-cooked meal. This is expressed explicitly in Rembrandt’s painting and in Nouwen’s interpretation of it. Rembrandt painted the father’s two hands on his son’s shoulders, so that one imitates a man’s strong hand and the other looks like a woman’s gentle hand. And he placed a woman faintly in the background of the canvas to indicate her shared presence. God loves all His children that way today. He loves you and me no matter our age, gender, ethnic, religious, or geographical background. We are all His kids!

In difficult moments it is not easy to keep our knowledge of God clearly

in mind. But we must stay focused on it just the same. At moments of catastrophic destruction, as this world reaches its end, we must know for certain that He is our Creator and the Creator of the whole world. At moments when law and order are flaunted, the unjust are arrogant, and the enemies of God sin with a high hand, we must know God’s will and His ethical demands, for only they can bring order to our lives, our families, and our society. When love turns to hate or becomes dulled by absence and inattention, and those we have embraced become our enemies, we need to know God who loves all His children, always, without condition. That, I believe, is what Ellen White had in mind when she uttered her last words: “I know in whom I have believed.”

Niels-Erik Andreasen (Ph.D., Vanderbilt University) is president of Andrews University. This article is based on a devotional sermon given during a recent Annual Council of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. His address: Andrews University; Berrien Springs, Michigan 49104; U.S.A.

Attention, communicators!

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Reality...

Continued from page 10.

to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind” (Job 12:7-10, KJV).

Clifford Goldstein is the editor of the *Adult Bible Study Guide*. This article is excerpted from his book *God, Gödel, and Grace: A Philosophy of Faith* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 2003). Used by permission.

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PROFILES



Born on a farm in the interior of Uruguay, Romualdo Costa learned to love natural landscapes during his childhood. As one of the youngest of 11 siblings, he enjoyed the carefree life outdoors, riding on horseback, fishing in the nearby river, and climbing the wooded hills.

Romualdo's innate talent for drawing and painting manifested itself early, and, with the encouragement of an art teacher, began to blossom during his adolescence. Soon painting became Costa's passion, and for decades he has painted almost every day. As a result, he has created more than 15,000 paintings of different sizes and on different surfaces.

In 1972 Costa, now married, moved with his family to Venezuela, where he became a well-known and admired painter. In 1989, seeking new visual experiences and artistic opportunities, he moved with his family to Puerto Rico.

Since 2001, he has resided in the United States, where he continues to paint. "On a day in which I cannot paint, I feel as sad as an owl," he states. Costa has shown his paintings in more than 100 personal expositions and has served as juror in many art exhibitions.

Romualdo Costa

Dialogue with an Adventist landscape painter from Uruguay

His work is now in private collections in many countries of the world.

Costa is married to Alba Estades, also a painter, and they have three grown sons: Enrique, Robert, and Ronald.

Dialogue visited the artist at his home, surrounded by some of his paintings. He graciously invites us in and we begin our conversation.

■ *How did you become a painter?*

I began drawing and painting as a child. When I was 14 years old, in the city of Melo, Uruguay, I walked by a house that had one large window open. Peering inside, I saw several oil paintings hanging on the walls, and for several minutes I just looked at them, transfixed. A few days later, visiting the city again, I saw that the windows of that house were almost closed. So I climbed on the window sill to look in again and noticed that an artist was painting on a canvass. Although the painter asked me to stop staring and move on, I went home convinced that some day I could also become a painter.

■ *What prompted you to devote your life to painting?*

First, the sheer pleasure that I derive from painting. Second, as I began decorating tablecloths and small carpets, people began buying them. So when I was 20 I discovered that I could combine my work as a literature evangelist with my artistic endeavors. For a while, I also decorated porcelain at a factory. Eight years later, my paintings provided me with enough income to marry and start a family.

■ *Where do you get ideas for your paintings?*

Mostly from observing nature. For that reason I like to travel and visit beautiful sites outdoors. There is so much to see! One notices the shapes, the contrasts of light and shadows, the shifting colors at different times of the day. I also draw inspiration from observing other paintings.

■ *What is your favorite subject?*

Nature has fascinated me since my childhood. Everything in it speaks of a Creator God who loves variety, color, and beauty. In landscapes, I like to combine earth, sky, and water, adding trees and flowers. One of the advantages of being a painter is that one has the freedom to create his or her own landscape scene, changing some of the elements to fit the concept one has in mind.

■ *Do you favor a particular paint medium?*

For years I used oil; but oil dries slowly, and this requires that the artist take long pauses before using a different color. Besides, in humid climates, oil paintings can get moldy. In addition, oil paints had powerful petroleum and lead components that were quite unhealthy. So I switched to acrylic paints that dry quickly and don't get moldy.

■ *Under what circumstances did you join the Seventh-day Adventist Church?*

My father was a faithful member of the Catholic Church. We had an altar at home, and each night we prayed the rosary. But he also read the Bible to us, although many people thought it was a dangerous book. One night, when I

was a teenager, one of my sisters had a striking dream in which she saw two bright lights entering our home through the front door. She woke up frightened and ran to tell my father about the dream. Dad calmed her down and told her to go back to sleep. However, the following morning two Adventist literature evangelists came through that door! For several days they studied the teachings of the Bible with our family. Within a few months, all of us were baptized in the river that ran at the back of our farm. Since we were the only Adventists in the region, the 14 of us began keeping the seventh-day Sabbath and having our own devotionals and worship services at home.

■ *What happened next?*

Our family had been quite popular among our neighbors. Many of them enjoyed the fruits and vegetables that we produced and gave them free. But after we became Adventists, their attitude changed drastically. Our relatives and friends withdrew from us and made us the object of scorn. Those were sad days for our family. We were denounced to the police as dangerous people. One of the officers came to our school, took us aside, and asked us questions about our beliefs and worship practices. We told him that we studied the Bible together, sang songs, and prayed directly to God. Our teacher intervened and asked him if it was a crime to read the Bible in a free country. The officer answered that, of course, it was not a crime, and then he left.

■ *Is there a connection between your Christian convictions and your art?*

It could not be any closer! I see my painting as a miniature and modest imitation of God's magnificent creative powers revealed in nature. As I paint, I express my gratitude to Him.

■ *How do you nurture your own spiritual life?*

In our family, we follow the "classic" Christian formula. We study the Bible and pray daily; we are active in the local Adventist congregation, and we share our faith with others whenever we have an opportunity. Jesus Christ is at the center of our lives as a trusted friend. And as we receive God's blessings, we seek to bless others.

■ *Has your art given you occasions to witness for Christ?*

Yes, many. People that come to see exhibitions of my work usually ask questions. This gives me a natural opening to speak about my motives, hopes, and convictions. While we lived in Venezuela, the national Congress honored me by granting me citizenship and invited me to exhibit my paintings on the ground floor of their building every year. As senators, congressmen, and staff came to see them, I gave away Bibles to those who showed an interest in spiritual subjects.

■ *As a painter, what gives you the greatest satisfaction?*

To see a painting completed! And to see how people enjoy what I have painted. My desire is to convey joy and peace to them. One lady who had bought one of my landscape paintings came to thank me and told me her story. For various reasons, she was suffering from depression and was interned for therapy. She asked that the painting be brought from her home to the room where she was staying and every morning spent time contemplating it. She felt that peace and hope came back to her life, and was soon able to go back home, healed.

Beyond that personal satisfaction, I am thankful that earnings from the sale of my paintings allowed me to provide for my family, educate our sons, sponsor several promising students, and support the Adventist Church's mission.

■ *Tell us about your wife.*

Alba began painting after our mar-

riage and has become a very good painter and a friendly critic of my work. In Venezuela, she won first prize in an international exhibition of women painters. We have shared many years of happiness together.

■ *Any counsel to young people with an inclination toward painting?*

Just start painting to develop your skills until you find your own strengths and style. Be willing to learn from others. Do that and your life will become richer and more enjoyable.

If their vocation and talent are strong, they may be able to take up art as their life vocation.

I believe that painting has allowed me to live a long life. God has given each of us a certain artistic ability, be it painting, sculpture, music, design, or creative writing. Our task is to nurture this gift with patient perseverance.

■ *If, by God's grace, you get to the New Earth, do you see yourself still painting there?*

I don't know. Even in our sinful and imperfect world, we find such beauty that almost overwhelms us. In the Earth made new there will be so much beauty surrounding us that I wonder if we will dare to imitate it with a mere painting. Perhaps God will grant the redeemed other, superior artistic abilities, which we cannot even imagine now. But I am certainly looking forward in hope to the day when Christ will make all things new!

Interview by Humberto M. Rasi

Humberto M. Rasi is the founder and editor-in-chief of *Dialogue*. Romualdo Costa's mailing address: 2255 Cahuila, Apt. 51; Colton, California 92324, U.S.A.

PROFILES



Elaine Kennedy grew up in the plains of Enid, Oklahoma. Her lifelong love of geology began early, as she collected the fossils that are abundant in eastern Oklahoma. In 1981, she obtained a B.S. in geology, and four years later, another B.S. in education from Phillips University.

After completing an M.S. in geology from Loma Linda University (La Sierra Campus) in 1987, and a Ph.D. in geology from the University of California in 1991, Elaine joined the Geoscience Research Institute in 1991 as a research scientist. She holds memberships in the Society for Sedimentary Geology, the Geological Society of America, the International Association of Sedimentologists, and the Affiliation of Christian Geologists.

Her research projects include deep-water sedimentation for the Tapeats Sandstone (Grand Canyon, Arizona), and sedimentological study of dinosaur egg and eggshell fragment deposits in Patagonia, Argentina. Her publications range from reports in peer-reviewed scientific journals to her personal testimony in church publications.

Elaine's husband, Dee, is a project manager for a mechanical engineering company in southern California. They have two adult daughters, Shelley and Ami. In addition to fossil-collecting, Elaine also enjoys quilting, opera, reading, and studying the cultural roots of her Scottish, English, German, and Cherokee heritage.

Elaine Kennedy

Dialogue with an Adventist geologist

■ *When did you first become aware of a potential conflict between traditional scientific interpretations of origins and your belief in God as Creator?*

In my 9th-grade biology class, I became upset by the ideas in Darwin's Origin of Species, but my teacher told me not to let one man's opinion upset me so much. I interpreted that to mean I was intelligent enough to think for myself!

■ *How did you resolve this challenge to your faith?*

While I was still in high school, a new pastor came to town, and he explained that we (Southern Baptists) had "misunderstood" the creation account of Genesis and that God had molded and developed life through the process of evolution. His views of theistic evolution were comforting to me because I could retain both my belief in God as Creator and the overwhelming respect that I had for science.

■ *You enrolled in college to do a major in geology. How did your views of God change as your studies continued?*

I had difficulty reconciling the image of a loving Creator with all the death and destruction that appeared in the mass-mortality deposits. Though our church taught that death was the result of sin, I saw death as a natural part of the life cycle created by God—which made Him the author of death. This image of God wasn't consistent with the One I'd come to know through personal experience.

■ *What helped you emerge from this spiritual crisis?*

I left college in my junior year to marry Dee, an Air Force pilot, and we

joined a non-denominational Bible study group. Our interest in end-time events was heightened as we read Hal Lindsay's *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Then we saw an advertisement for Kenneth Cox's *Prophecy Crusade*. We had never heard of Seventh-day Adventists before, but thought the meetings were worth attending if we could learn more about the imminent return of Christ. Each evening we took notes and compared them with Lindsay's book. The following evening we would corner Elder Cox and challenge him with: "Hal Lindsay says..."

He'd just smile and say, "Let's see what the Bible has to say about that," and he'd show us, from the Bible, where he derived his theology. Gradually, the Bible began to make sense as a complete body of work.

■ *Eventually, this evangelistic series covered the topic of a literal six-day creation. Given your background in science, how did you respond?*

One night the sermon title was "Adam's Mother's Birthday," and after the meeting, I told Elder Cox that I was a student of geology and that it was crazy to present a literal creation and a short chronology for life on Earth. Instead of reaching for his Bible, he responded by saying that he wanted to give me a book to read. The book was Harold Coffin's *Creation: Accident or Design?* As I skimmed through the chapters, I realized that the author was using the same data and evidence that I'd been taught, but that his interpretations and conclusions were quite different.

I was stunned to realize that I could believe in the Bible and still be a scientist. The problem wasn't the data; it

was the interpretations that were placed on the data. At last the conflict was resolved; once again God became the loving Creator described in the Bible. Both Dee and I accepted the seventh-day Sabbath as a memorial of Creation.

■ *You and Dee joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Eventually you decided to finish your college degree...*

Dee was unable to keep both the Sabbath and his military career; so he decided to get a Master's degree in math education. By then, we'd also started a family; so my own educational plans were sidetracked. After our youngest daughter started attending preschool, Dee encouraged me to resume my studies, one class at a time. Later I completed a second bachelor's degree in education, while teaching earth science at a local junior high school.

■ *Did you intend to remain an earth-science teacher for the rest of your career?*

I thought so, but earlier, while we were living in Texas, Harold Coffin came to Southwestern Adventist College to introduce a new academy science textbook. We were overjoyed to meet the author of the book that had changed my life, and continued to correspond with him. Dr. Coffin encouraged me to pursue a doctorate in geology, with the eventual goal of joining the Geoscience Research Institute. Ultimately that dream became a reality.

■ *While earning your Ph.D., you probably encountered Sabbath issues, with scheduled field trips or even examinations. Did you also have difficulty remaining in the program because you were a committed creationist?*

My professors were understanding about my Sabbath convictions, and one even went out of his way to ensure that I could participate in a required field trip and still keep the Sabbath. It was more difficult to be a creationist in an area of study that is dominated by evolutionary teaching. Before I entered the

program, I told God that I was placing my degree in His hands and that I would openly share my faith. I didn't believe I was there to be aggressively evangelistic, but I had a Christian poster on the wall of my cubicle; and a Bible and a copy of *Steps to Christ* on my desk. The door was always open for discussion with whomever God's Spirit sent my way.

■ *What advice do you have for Adventist students who might be facing challenges to their faith, either from Sabbath keeping, or more ideological issues?*

You don't have to be a closet Christian to attend a public university. The worst mistakes I've ever seen are those committed by students with a very limited understanding of an issue who decide to take on a university professor and "set him or her straight." If one's faith is being challenged, one must make a stand, but there are many ways to do this without trying to humiliate a professor in public. If emotions are pushing you to respond, back off and pray for the Holy Spirit's leading. You really need God's wisdom and strength in these instances. When it comes to God's laws, you simply cannot compromise.

■ *From the viewpoint of a Christian geologist, what has convinced you that the biblical account of Creation and the Flood (Genesis 1-11) is valid and factual?*

First, I believe that the Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God and that the biblical account is absolutely true with respect to Earth history. I also believe that the short chronology for life that is required by this view is valid.

Second, I see catastrophism written all over Earth's surface. I look at the Precambrian rocks, the "oldest" rocks on Earth, and I think of Day 3 of Creation week. I look at mountains and mass mortalities and think of the Genesis flood. Paraconformities, mega-

sequences, zones of rupture of Earth's crust (the global ridge rift system), and the unique global deposits (redbeds, fossil fuels, chalks, black shales, etc.) provide evidence for a highly complex global catastrophe. I also see time in the rock record, and this reinforces my concepts with regard to the complexity of the event.

Third, I know that time is the crucial issue in these discussions. The long ages of the standard Earth-history model reside more and more between the rock layers, not in them.

Fourth, there are things I do not know and cannot explain. The biggest one is this: Why do the sequences in the rock record and the sequences in the fossil record match worldwide? I have plenty of ideas, but not scientifically acceptable answers. I believe it will take a team of researchers to put this together.

■ *Does working for the Seventh-day Adventist Church affect your work as a geologist?*

Definitely! The church has supported my research with funding and encouragement. Church leaders have neither told me what or where to research, nor what conclusions to draw. My theological perspective raises questions that would not be considered at any other institution, but here at the Geoscience Research Institute, I am free to seek the answers. Consequently, I believe that my research makes contributions to the body of scientific knowledge and to the church's mission.

Interview by Kathy Ching

Kathy Ching is the publications/graphics editor for the Geoscience Research Institute. Elaine Kennedy may be contacted at the Geoscience Research Institute; 11060 Campus Street; Loma Linda, California 92350; U.S.A. Email: ekennedy@univ.llu.edu.

VIEWPOINT

Passionate about *The Passion*

by Samuele Bacchiocchi

Mel Gibson's movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, has stirred up deep emotions and passionate controversies. For some, the movie has become the touchstone of orthodoxy that separates the "sheep" from the "goats." A more realistic separation is between emotional and rational viewers, and most fall in the former category. The emotions generated prevent a rational evaluation of the movie, especially by viewers unfamiliar with the biblical and historical errors subtly embedded in the film.

From a cinematographic perspective, the movie is an outstanding artistic achievement. The characters look real. The Jews, the Roman soldiers, Pilate, his wife, and the disciples are all dressed in the costumes of the times. Mary is an exception, as she looks more like a medieval nun than a first-century Jewish woman. Jim Caviezel, who interprets Christ, drips with sweat and blood and staggers throughout most of the film with one eye permanently closed, after being brutally beaten by soldiers within seconds of his arrest. The slow-motion whipping of Jesus accompanied by soft Gregorian chant stirs up deep emotional responses.

In spite of its outstanding artistic qualities, *The Passion* poses serious biblical and theological problems. It is filled with non-biblical elements, such as: the frequent appearances of Satan as an androgynous, hooded figure; Mary Magdalene entreating Roman soldiers to help Jesus; Judas being driven to suicide by demon-possessed children; Pilate's wife giving to Mary linens with which to bury Jesus; the juxtaposition of the bleeding body of Christ on the Cross with scenes of the Last Supper to underscore how the Eucharist is truly the body and blood of Christ; and the final earthquake that splits the Temple in two.

In addition to these and other scenes, a Bible-believing Christian strongly disagrees with several theological concepts that reflect Gibson's religious convictions, but that are contrary to the plain teaching of Scripture. Three of these deserve our notice.

The prominent role of Mary

Gibson portrays Mary throughout the 14 stations of the Cross as a partner with Christ in human redemption. After his denial, Peter falls at the feet of Mary, calling her "Mother," and asks for her forgiveness. At the Cross, Mary utters the words: "Let me die with you."

In an interview, Jim Caviezel, who plays the role of Christ in the movie, said: "This film is something that I believe was made

The same story told differently

by Alberto R. Treiyr

Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* is the same story told differently, and so our reactions will come from our varying perspectives. While some Jews opposed the film as revealing anti-semitism, Muslim countries have allowed its screening because they heard about that Jewish reaction. Some secular authorities presume that the film exalts violence without understanding the real background of the Cross. There are Christians who tore their clothes for what Gibson added to the Gospels' narrative. The majority, however, are impressed by the message of the film. Testimonies of astounding conversions as a result of watching *The Passion* have been reported by the press.

Missionary value

Many Seventh-day Adventist congregations in South America were sharing books about the life of Christ near the cinemas where the movie was shown. A special book, *Passion of the Ages*, was published in the U.S.A., with the last 14 chapters of the book *Desire of Ages* by Ellen White. The film will be soon available in videos and DVDs, allowing it to be used with personal missionary purposes and in evangelistic meetings.

Some earlier films had presented Jesus as quick-tempered before His opponents or as too kind with the people. Nonetheless, some pastors have shown those films in my evangelistic crusades, to prepare the people to hear the message from the Bible. After the film was presented, I used to say that the actors, as well as ourselves as Christians, cannot always represent worthily the perfect character of the Son of God. I expect to say the same after of a portion of Gibson's film is projected before my future lectures. The most sensitive ministers may decide to leave out from the movie those scenes that upset them the most.

What to remove?

True, I got tired of the many times Mary appears in the film. However, Mary's role did not displease my wife. We agreed, however, that it would be better to eliminate as senseless the section where she cleans her Son's blood that has fallen on the floor, with a cloak given to her by the wife of Pilate. The fact is that the gospels tell that Mary followed her Son to the cross, together with other faithful women.

Some would probably want to delete the devil from the movie. But it is easy to imagine that the devil was even in Gethsemane, together with the demons, trying to discourage the Lord. In other parts of the movie, the devil is well repre-

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by Mary for her Son. Mary has always pointed me toward the truth.... She architected this whole thing" (*National Catholic Register*, January 30, 2004).

Gibson expresses his amazement at how evangelicals are accepting *The Passion*, "though the film is so Marian" ("Mel, Mary, and Mothers," *Christianity Today*, March 2004). Personally I am amazed at how even some Adventists are reconsidering the role of Mary in our salvation.

Salvation through Christ's suffering

The centerpiece of *The Passion* is the relentless beating, whipping, and ripping of Christ's flesh until He is crucified. There is no question that the crucifixion was brutal. But Gibson is dishing out to Christ the kind of punishment that would kill any superman three times over before his execution. Why? The answer is to be found in Gibson's belief in salvation through the intensity of Christ's suffering.

According to this belief, taught by Catholic mystics like Anne Emmerich who is the major source of the movie, Christ had to suffer in His body and mind the equivalent punishment for all the sins of humankind, in order to satisfy the demands of divine justice. This sadistic view of God is foreign to Scripture, and turns Him into a Being to fear rather than to love.

The Mass as the re-enactment of Christ's sacrifice

Gibson's movie projects Christ's sacrifice as taking place in a small scale at every celebration of the Mass. The script of *The Passion* was specifically written to highlight the link between Christ's suffering and death, and the celebration of the Mass. Gibson's intent is to show that the sacrifice of the Cross and the Mass are the same thing.

"The goal of the movie," as Gibson admits in an interview, "is to shake modern audiences by brashly juxtaposing the sacrifice of the cross with the sacrifice of the altar—which is the same thing" (www.providencepca.com/essays/passion.html).

The Roman Catholic belief that Christ can be sacrificed time and again, and benefits accrue each time from His fresh atonement, is in contradiction to what the Scripture teaches: "He did this once for all when he offered up himself" (Hebrews 7:27, RSV). Protestants have historically rejected as "abominable" the idea that the priest at the altar has the power to sacrifice Christ again and again. But the widespread acceptance of *The Passion* by evangelical Christians speaks volumes about how the gulf of separation between Catholicism and Protestantism is being bridged and how Protestants are being drawn into the Catholic fold.

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sented as observing everything that occurs. I would remove the representation of demons through children or dwarfs who torment Judas. Also, the final portrayal of the devil as an enraged monster is not the best.

The furious brutality shown in the film against Jesus may upset many. But, were the authorities gentle with the Lord? I was touched by the dignity that the Son of God revealed under provocation and abuse. Some scenes of additional punishment when He bears the cross may be also removed, because they are not in the gospels. Even so, the book *Desire of Ages*—an inspired and masterful biography—depicts some soldiers sharing in the mockery and mistreatment of Jesus by the people, as well as some other Romans protecting Him from the multitude who want to lynch Him on His way to Calvary.

Theological messages

The love of the Son of God for His worst enemies is clearly portrayed in *The Passion*, condemning implicitly all kinds of "Christian" genocide. The divine forbearance and self-denial which we must possess as true Christians when we are slandered and persecuted, the noble example of self-control under harassment and insult—all this and much more appear powerfully in Gibson's movie.

Jesus stamping the serpent, although not literally biblical, conveys the triumph of Christ over Satan (see Genesis 3:15; Revelation 12:9). Contrary to the political ambitions of his church, Gibson shows us that the kingdom of the Lord is not of this world. He also leads us to face the suffering of the Son of God through the look of Judas, Peter, Mary, and the sinner woman whom he rightly identifies with Mary Magdalene (see *Desire of Ages*, p. 568).

What the film lacks

We cannot require Gibson to include everything we would like to see in his film. John wrote the last Gospel because he felt that many important events were not included in the former ones. But he had to acknowledge that "the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written" to complete the story (John 21:25, NIV). In addition, the Epistles and the book of Revelation were needed to explain and project toward the end of the world the story of the Cross. Let us then tell others what is lacking in Gibson's movie. Let others, too, complement our testimony with their own experience, because no one will be able to exhaust that story. "The cross of Christ will be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity" (Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 651).

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OPEN FORUM

Should I drink wine for my health?

About 10 years ago, in my early teens, I pledged not to drink any beverage containing alcohol. Thus far, I am keeping my promise, and have no regrets. Recently, however, I've been reading reports about the health benefits of drinking wine regularly. Other reports seem to contradict those findings. I'm confused. Is wine drinking good for one's health?

Our society is bombarded by media reports that regular intake of alcohol is beneficial to one's health. Many articles in recent scientific literature have discussed the health benefits of alcohol. It would be dishonest not to acknowledge that the intake of small quantities of alcohol has been shown to have some health benefit as far as coronary artery disease is concerned. This has also been demonstrated in the laboratory setting by exposing the cells lining the inside of artery walls (endothelial cells) to alcohol; some functions of these cells are enhanced by alcohol.

However, it is important to remember two things. First, this particular evidence has been observed experimentally in cell cultures, but life is not lived in a Petri dish! Second, none of the coronary vascular benefits apply to young people. The subjects studied are middle-aged and older, mainly men. Most of the individuals have had risk factors for coronary artery disease. The studies have been observational and not randomized. This means that they have not been designed to evaluate prospective (future) outcomes or results, and therefore their absolute significance is open to question.

To balance the argument on the benefit related to red wine, it must

be emphasized that unfermented red grape juice has been shown to have significant health benefits. This is because of the presence of substances such as resveratrol and flavonoids, which act as antioxidants. They decrease clotting and have a positive effect on the endothelial cells.

There are many negative aspects related to the consumption of alcohol. I believe this whole debate can be summarized in the words of an editorial in a prominent medical journal: "The data on alcohol and cardiovascular disease are still correlative, whereas the toxic effects of alcohol are well established." Alcohol is highly addictive; up to 15 percent of those who use alcohol will become either problem drinkers or actual alcoholics! Alcohol is the leading cause of preventable mental retardation in many countries, including the U.S.A.; this is because of the toxic effects of alcohol on the fetus if alcohol is consumed during pregnancy. Alcohol is a leading cause of death through violence, accidents, trauma, and diseases induced by this toxin. Alcohol has been shown to increase the risk of various cancers, including breast cancer; liver disease is also increased by excessive consumption. These undesirable side-effects of alcohol are seldom mentioned, especially in the lay press, when the so-called "health" benefits of alcohol are reported. Unfortunately, the press doesn't cover the social, physical, and emotional consequences of alcohol consumption.

Are college/university groups affected by alcohol problems? Here are some compelling statistics that emerged from a large study on college students, aged 18 to 24, in the U.S.A. All prob-

lems are related to alcohol use.

- 1,400 students die each year.
- 500,000 students are unintentionally injured.
- 600,000 students are assaulted by another student.
- 70,000 students each year are victims of alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape.
- 400,000 students each year had unprotected sex, and more than 100,000 were too intoxicated to know whether they had consented.
- 2.1 million students drove a car while under the influence of alcohol.
- 25 percent of college students reported negative academic consequences of their drinking.

In the light of these facts, it does not make sense, nor is it a medical advance, to substitute one disease (or many diseases) for a few health benefits to the coronary arteries. This is particularly true when proven preventive therapies such as exercise, smoking cessation, lowering cholesterol levels, and maintaining normal blood pressure have none of the undesirable effects of alcohol.

I hope you are now more determined than ever to stick to your decision not to take alcoholic beverages. The evidence should encourage you and you will not have regrets. The best way to

Continued on page 27.

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CAMPUS LIFE

How to witness to your Muslim friends

by Borge Schantz

Love, respect, and friendship can do more for a genuine exchange of ideas than all the logic and persuasion in the world.

To witness to others and even try to convince them to accept the teachings of the Bible and the Gospel is the privilege and responsibility of every Christian. However, prejudice often marks our relationship with others who belong to a different race, speak another language, have another skin color, or believe in another religion. Such prejudice is unworthy of the name we carry as Christians and hinders both relationships and witnessing.

Against that background, how do you as a Christian student relate, perhaps even witness, to your fellow students and friends who happen to be Muslims? The task is delicate, sensitive, and often misunderstood. This article will try to be honest and faithful to the gospel and the Great Commission. It will attempt to present witnessing principles that reveal love and care for the person whom we wish to reach. Here are some pointers that will help you better understand your Muslim friends.

Become aware of the contributions of Islam

In the Middle Ages, at a time when Europe lived in both spiritual and religious darkness, the Muslims, especially in the Arabic world, enjoyed an era with developments in many areas of the sciences. Muslims have a right to be proud of these achievements, which

really rekindled the advance of science in the Western world. This included discoveries and research in medicine, mathematics, geography, and astronomy. The zenith of these amazing scientific explorations was in the years 900-1200 A.D.

Arab and Muslim scholars in this period were associated with not only Christian and Jewish experts, but also intellectuals from China and Persia. A willingness and openness to work together marked their contribution to knowledge in many fields. Valuable scholarly Greek texts in danger of being forgotten—even lost in the Dark Ages of Europe—were translated into Arabic and preserved. The Arabic language became the lingua franca for the scientists who worked together in Baghdad, Cairo, and Cordoba.

At the end of the 13th century, however, this golden era in art and science began to decline. Many reasons for this retrogression and the decline in Arab civilization could be listed. Wars ending in defeats, state monopoly with high taxes, and economic decadence no doubt were to blame. Many, however, feel that the blame was to be found in Islamic orthodoxy, where the Koran was interpreted in a restrictive way and science was crowded out with religious injunctions.

At the time of the decline of the Islamic civilization and science, Europe experienced not only the Reformation but also a renaissance in science and arts. This opened a new world of knowledge. Among other factors, the translation of the Arabic texts helped to rediscover their tradition of scholarship. They also could build on the well-developed Arabic scientific discoveries.

Understand the Muslim situation today

The results of those developments in the Islamic world centuries ago are still felt in Muslim countries. The president of one of the most powerful Muslim nations, Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, recently called upon the entire Muslim world, with its 1.2 billion people, to create a multibillion fund to promote science and technology. He mentioned that Islamic nations have about one quarter of the world's population and 70 percent of all energy resources. Still they produce less than one-fifth of the national product of Japan, which only has one tenth the population of the Islamic world. He also drew attention to the fact that Japan has more than 1,000 universities, whereas the whole Muslim world has less than 450.

Be aware that there are “Muslims” and “Muslims”

A German linguist proposes that 9/11 will be an entry in future dictionaries. The tragic events that hit the United States so directly and severely have had negative consequences for the whole world. These tragic happenings in New York and Washington, followed by a series of brutal acts, have affected not only world finance, tourism, and aviation, but also relationships between Muslims and Christians as well as Muslims with Muslims.

Some Muslims are embarrassed and ashamed of these events. A few believe that, to some extent, the 9/11 and other attacks are justified. On a university campus, Muslims holding those different views will have a tendency to isolate themselves and interact socially only with other Muslims. Many will,

fortunately, mix freely with their fellow-students, keen on being acquainted with them, sometimes seeking their assistance in their studies.

Muslim students hold various positions on the Islamic theological scale. These orientations will vary from the orthodox, who take the words of the Koran literally and follow the traditions closely, to those who are only nominal Muslims and have abandoned most Islamic beliefs and practices. Between these positions, one finds some who hold liberal interpretations of the Islamic beliefs and practices, as well as those who adhere to mystical and syncretistic ideas, with folk-beliefs being mixed with Islamic tenets.

It is obvious, therefore, that there can be no standard methodology for Christian witness to Muslims. There are, however, some elementary principles that can help you to relate better with Muslim friends in your college or university, where they may feel anxiety about being in the minority.

Be an understanding friend

Muslim students are, at least in the beginning of their stay in a foreign country, in a state of transition. They are uprooted from their daily routine in an Islamic environment. Life in a permissive society, with its non-restrictive lifestyle and various freedoms, is not always easy to handle for a person who comes from a Muslim country, with many controls on public and private life. This new experience puts them on guard—even creating suspicion. But they are open to new friends and ideas, especially when these will help them to face the new challenges.

Genuine friendship is the most important condition for establishing a trustful and amiable relationship with your fellow Muslim students. It is of utmost importance that mutual confidence and understanding provide the foundation for meaningful communication. This friendliness can be expressed as an appreciation for a service, a helping hand or a kind word.

A Muslim student who is new in a foreign country could be in need for assistance in various ways. He or she may have linguistic problems in understanding the lectures or in expressing in the new language what has been taught in the classroom. Muslim students may need help in explaining to the cafeteria staff the special diet Muslims follow. Hospitality is of extreme importance in Islam. An invitation to a Muslim fellow-student is a positive affirmation of a friendship. In such cases, the special diet of Muslims must be respected.

Before a meaningful dialogue can be established with a Muslim, respect for his or her religion must be apparent. An elementary knowledge of Islam as a religion, its belief system, rituals, rules and regulations is imperative. Information relating to the home country of the Muslim friend is also a must.

Avoid two tempting pitfalls

It does not take long for a conversation with a Muslim friend to reach a point of some ill considered comparisons. There will be temptations to draw parallels between the two founders of the two religions, namely Jesus and Mohammed. This will easily lead to comparisons between the Bible and the Koran.

To Christians, Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man in order to give humankind the hope of salvation. For Muslims, Mohammed was a man, called by Allah to be his prophet (messenger or apostle). Christ was divine, Mohammed was human. The difference in the concepts can be summarized thus:

In Islam, the word of Allah became the Koran. For the Muslim, the Koran as the book from heaven is the most perfect object in this world. Mohammed was called by Allah to bring this word to the Muslims. Mohammed in this way became the messenger of Allah.

In the Christian understanding,

the Word of God became flesh when Christ was born (John 1:14). The Bible, most Christians believe, was only one way in which God chose to communicate with humankind. Most Christians believe that the Holy Spirit inspired erring humans with imperfect language as spokespersons.

Thus, in drawing a parallel, the perfect in Christianity—Jesus Christ—should be compared with what Islam regards as perfect—the Koran. On the second level, the Bible, expression of divine truth in human language, should be compared with Mohammed, who spoke the words of Allah in the Arabic language.

Another pitfall to be avoided is when the conversation turns into a comparison between the two religions. Here both Christians and Muslims are inclined to compare what is ideal in their own religion with what is practiced in the other religion. Muslims will talk about the Islamic ideals of complete abstinence from alcohol with the excessive use of liquor by Christians. They will draw attention to the frivolous way women in Christian countries dress compared with the required dress (*hijab*) of Muslim women when they appear in public.

Christians will draw attention to Muslim hijackers and suicide bombers, comparing them with the ideals of human behavior set forth in the Bible. They will talk about how Muslim sects fight each other with fatal weapons, and the abuses their women suffer in education, marriage, and divorce.

In such discussions, we must endeavor to compare the ideal with the ideal. We will then agree that, although the two religions differ considerably on their concepts of divinity and salvation, their ethics and moral teachings are somewhat similar.

On the folk-level where people live their daily lives, no religion has been able to fully implement its morals. There is here no big difference among people, be they Muslims, Christians, Hindus, or people of any other religion.

Respect conventions

It can roughly be stated that Islam is a “shame religion” and that Christianity is a “guilt religion.” This means, for instance, that in a discussion a Muslim (and, for that matter, many Christians as well) does not appreciate losing face. In Eastern cultures, it is not only embarrassing but also humiliating to lose face. When a religious dialogue between a Christian and a Muslim reaches a confrontational level on doctrinal issues, it is worth remembering the ancient saying: To win an argument can mean losing a friend. Avoid this kind of dialogue. Instead, build a meaningful friendship when each can speak his or her mind and discuss their religious convictions without hurting the other.

It’s also important to remember that intense discussions be restricted to one-on-one level as mutual friends. Discussion of controversial issues with even a friend in the presence of others may put both in an embarrassing spot. Group discussions have their place, but often there is a risk: What one says can be misquoted or misrepresented by another, especially when that topic happens to be the sensitive issue of faith and religion. Even when a person agrees with your basic position, he or she may not say so in the dynamic of a group setting.

What we discuss is as important as how we discuss. Experience has taught me that sensitivity and gentleness must characterize our dialogue with our Muslim friends. The journey of faith often must begin at a deeply felt inner need, and not at heavy theology. To lead a person to recognize his or her sinful condition and a need for a Saviour is more important than to start a debate on the Trinity, a topic that even the most informed Christian may find it difficult to fathom. In any case, a penitent and humble atmosphere and attitude should govern any discussion on how Christ meets humanity’s deepest needs.

And moreover...

1. Remember that there are more similarities than dissimilarities between the cultures of the world. Concern, honesty, and love will help to overcome awkward obstacles in a cross-cultural Christian witness. Should you inadvertently transgress their rules of acceptable behavior, you will find that love and mutual respect are great reconcilers of cultural misunderstandings.

2. Respect privacy. Start your approaches with a single person. Your Muslim friend will not feel at home or free in a public meeting or conversation.

3. Teach simply, briefly, and directly. Proceed from the known to the unknown. To Muslims, their faith is not just beliefs. It is also a question of rituals. Often they are stronger on rituals than on doctrines.

4. Remember that in witnessing to Muslims, the patience of the saints is not just a holy phrase. It is a methodology.

5. Utilize every opportunity. For years, churches and missionary agencies have attempted to take the gospel to Muslims in their home countries. Now they are our neighbors, at least in the West. They study with us, work with us, shop with us. Should we not make them feel that we are their friends, and as friends, we have something important to share?

Borge Schantz (Ph.D., Fuller University) writes from his home in Denmark where he lives in retirement with his wife, Iris, after a long career as pastor, evangelist, church administrator and head of the Theology Department at Newbold College. He founded the Seventh-day Adventist Center for Islamic Studies and is the author of *Islam in the Post 9/11 World* (Alma Park, Grantham, Lincs., England: Autumn House, 2003). His email: boerge.schantz@adr.dk

Wine...

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avoid the risk of becoming an alcoholic or suffering the consequences mentioned above is to not take your first drink! God bless and strengthen you in your resolve.

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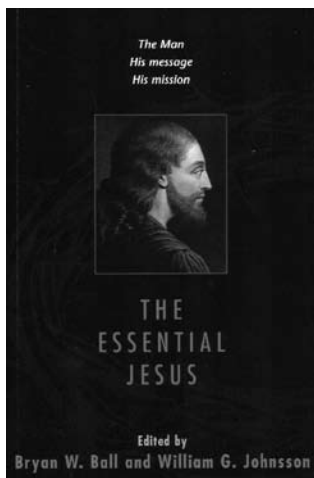
Attention, Adventist Professionals

If you hold a degree in any field and have an email address, we encourage you to join the Adventist Professionals' Network (APN). Sponsored by the Adventist Church, this global electronic registry assists participant institutions and agencies in locating consultants with expertise, volunteers for mission assignments, and candidates for positions in teaching, administration, or research. Enter your professional information directly in the APN website:

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Encourage other Adventist professionals to register!

BOOKS



The Essential Jesus: The Man, His Message, His Mission,

by Bryan W. Ball and William G. Johnson, editors (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publ. Assn.; Warburton, Australia: Signs Publ. Co., 2002; 299 pp.; paperback).

Reviewed by Roberto Badenas

Who is Jesus? Was He really a historical figure or a religious myth? Can the Gospel records that tell us who He was, what He did, and what He taught be relied upon? Or are those records and the witness of other New Testament writings the fictitious creation of fanatic enthusiasts who wanted to create a community dynamically different from the then dominant Jewish one? Is the Jesus of faith different from the Jesus of history?

These questions have stood like a colossus, staring down the corridors of history, challenging the most imaginative minds of critical scholars, giants of faith, and sometimes even simple believers. The book, *The Essential Jesus*, provides some answers. The editors, well trained in the critical art of doing theology and deeply committed to the faith given to the saints, have provided us a celebration of faith without diluting the essentials of scholarship. Twelve well-known Adventist scholars help us to meet the essential Jesus and His message and mission.

The book starts substantiating the historical evidence that the influence of Jesus has always led to noble living. If there is any negative influence of Christianity, it does not come from Jesus Himself, but from those who have taken His name in vain. A series of arguments, solidly documented from history and archeology, show the reliability of “The Jesus of History.” Two facts, indisputable and irrefutable, confront both the historian and the religious seeker: the mystery of the empty tomb and the rise of the Christian religion (p. 30).

The book adequately addresses the complex issues related to Christology—the ministry of the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament, the pre-existence, the incarnation, the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, and the mystery of being fully human and fully divine. The same can be said about the intriguing issues of soteriology, such as the purpose of the

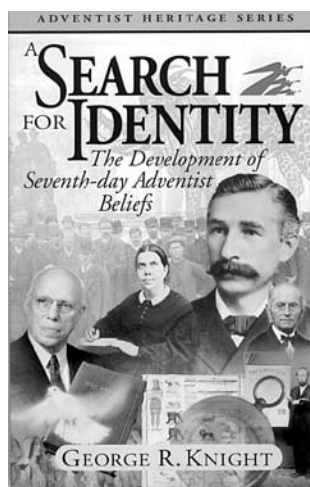
Cross, the salvific significance of Jesus’ death, the theories of the atonement, the meaning of a sacrificial death and substitutionary sacrifice, and the theological implications of expiation and propitiation.

Two very practical studies reflect on the relevance of Jesus for our personal life, offering thought-provoking reflections on the importance of following Jesus, and modeling our life, ethics and values on what He did and said during His earthly life. The book also deals with the ministry of Christ as High Priest and the second advent from a traditional Adventist perspective. The gospel mission entrusted by Jesus to His disciples is made so contemporary that it stands as a challenge to the readers to witness to Jesus in a secular and materialistic society through a persuasive lifestyle, a committed social involvement, and an effective evangelism.

And in the process, the book invites the readers to write the “fifth gospel,” telling and living the story of Jesus in our individual lives (p. 230). When we do that the mystery of history and the puzzle of theology—who is Jesus?—would give way to the positive affirmation that Jesus is our Saviour, Friend, and soon-coming Lord.

I would highly recommend that *Dialogue* readers don’t miss this rich and faith-affirming book.

Roberto Badenas (Th.D., Andrews University) is the education director and *Dialogue* representative for the Euro-African Division in Bern, Switzerland.



A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs,

by George R. Knight (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 2002; 223 pp., paperback).

Reviewed by Jean-Luc Rolland

George Knight is an accomplished writer and an eminent historian, whose scholarly gifts are exceeded only by his love for the Bible and Adventism. Professor of church history at Andrews University, Dr. Knight is perhaps the most published Adventist author today. His books range from philosophy of education to understanding Ellen White to walking

through several New Testament books to defining Adventist history in terms of its uniqueness, promises, and perils. As a historian, he is relentless in his pursuit of both truth and roots, and he applies the most critical tools in discovering both of these within the development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Three works thus far on Adventist history offer us a greater appreciation of Adventist heritage. The first dealt with *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*. The second one surveyed the development of Adventist organization in *Organizing to Beat the Devil: The Development of Adventist Church Structure*.

The third one, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs*, takes the author to a unique and coveted place in the history of Adventist scholarship. For here we have a book not just on history, but also on the history of Adventist thought. The author takes us on a journey through the contours of Adventism—its roots and its maturation, its struggles and its balances, and the complex road of doctrinal development.

The process provides a long-sought clarification for thoughtful Adventist students. How is Adventist belief related to Adventist identity? Are they inseparable twins? Or can one exist without the other? In trying to take the reader through the fascinating journey of understanding these issues, Knight gives us more than a handful: a skillfully woven historical tapestry, attention-gripping stories, portrayal of the wit and struggle of our pioneers, and a call to the current generation to discover and remain true to our religious identity.

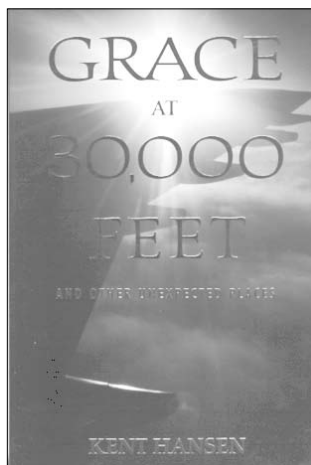
How did Adventists come to believe what they believe? In *A Search for Identity* Professor Knight not only tackles many hot potatoes of theology, but also shows how we can maintain a balance between pillars of our faith and development, progress, growth, maturity, and change in that faith. The controversies Knight deals with are the issues of inspiration and revelation, the shut-door theory, legalism in the 1880s, the Trinity, pantheism, fundamentalism, and perfectionism. The discussion shows quite clearly that resistance to development seems to be our most natural reflex and virtue, especially in a world that we suspect is gripped with irresistible hunger for change.

However, Dr. Knight is not a pessimist. He finds much to be optimistic about, and locates that hope in the preamble to the 1980 Statement of “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists.” That statement emphasizes that we are not bound to any human creedal system, but look to “the Bible as [our] only creed.” While this emphasis on the Bible has given us “certain fundamental beliefs,” it has also demanded of us a humble acknowledgment that these beliefs constitute our “Church’s understanding and expression” and not an email from heaven. Such a stance suggests that revision of those beliefs “may be expected.” This position, Dr. Knight

points out, is a direct heritage and fruit of the spirit of our pioneers to remain open to learn from the Spirit and optimize our relationship to God.

This book is, to a certain extent, more than a historical and theological work. It has to do with spirituality, and challenges us to remain open to the Spirit of God and be receptive to the promise that “He will teach us into all truth.” Scholarly and readable, this volume is a must read for everyone who wishes to know the history of the development of Adventist thought and who wants to translate the spirit of some of the founders of Adventism into his or her own life.

Jean-Luc Rolland teaches at Salève Adventist University and is the director of the Ellen G. White Research Center in France. He is currently pursuing a doctoral degree at the Protestant University of Montpellier. Email: jl.rolland@campusadventiste.edu.



Grace at 30,000 Feet and Other Unexpected Places,

by Kent Hansen

(Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 2002; 189 pp.; paperback).

Reviewed by Sylvia Rasi Gregorutti

A hectic work week is just ahead. The unknown, the stressful, the rush seem to beckon. You know it. You know your friends will face the same. Why not share a thought, a message, with your friends to lift them to face what’s ahead, and in the process lift yourself? Grace, God’s free grace, is powerful enough to help. So began Kent Hansen’s unusual ministry. He decided to send out simple messages of grace at work to six of his friends each week via email. The result is this profound, but conversational, one-to-one book, sharing God’s love for one another. Now, with the fifth anniversary of the “Word of Grace” approaching, the message of hope goes to more than 3,000 persons in a variety of workplaces: law firms, construction companies, accounting offices, computer manufacturing plants, universities, and

Continued on page 32.

FIRST PERSON

Coming home from the distant land

by Barry Gane

My connection to the church I owe to the unconditional love of godly Christian parents and a church family that saw potential that really only God could have revealed.

Just after my 17th birthday, I finally made the decision to be baptized. At my baptism I hoped the anger, questioning, and disquiet would cease—that things would change and I would change. However, within weeks of my baptism, I became further enmeshed with a group of friends that I thought I'd left behind. The bike gang seemed to hold greater appeal than ever. With my last few years in high school still ahead of me, I decided to spend less and less time there, and more and more time with the bikers. I left home regularly, telling my parents that I would never return. Instead of acting with anger, they simply let me know that the door was always open.

I was totally self-centered, angry with everyone without a reason. There was only one person in my life who mattered to me apart from myself, and that was my girlfriend. But I finally broke with her and decided to start a completely new life in another state. I took off with just a few dollars in my pocket, a change of clothes, and a sleeping bag, and headed west with an attitude that said, "Anywhere is better than here!" I had a couple of friends who felt the same way, so they joined me for the adventure.

Tired of sleeping on the ground and hungry as horses, we arrived in Adelaide, 1,200 miles from home. One of the guys tried to contact some friends, only to find that they weren't home. We decided to visit anyway; it was an easy house to break into. We thought we'd stay until they came home or until one of the neighbors called the police. But the owner of the

house was a pastor, and the neighbors must have been used to seeing kids around.

We ate the food in the fridge but couldn't bring ourselves to sleep in the family's beds. After a few days of sleeping on the floor, I was ready to try something different. I found an old mattress lying out in the backyard and dragged it inside. It smelled a bit, but at least it would be softer than the floor. When we returned to the house in the early hours of the next morning, I just rolled out the sleeping bag on the mattress and fell into an exhausted sleep. But when I awoke the next morning, I discovered my folly: I was covered with fleas. Obviously some other animal had used the mattress before me! I had bites all over me; I was scratching the skin off my body. There were so many fleas that the floor seemed to move.

Home started to look pretty good, and I decided that it was time to head back. It took me 48 hours of hitchhiking to get there. I was struggling with a savage case of the flu by the time I got home. I was exhausted and hadn't eaten well for a couple of weeks. Even though I hadn't slept for a few days, the first thing that I did was to call my girlfriend and ask her whether she'd go out for the night.

"I thought you were never coming back," she said.

"Well, I'm here. Do you want to go out or not?"

"OK."

I asked Dad for a loan of the pickup and some cash and headed off to pick up my girl. We went down to a deserted beach and spent hours talking. Finally, in the early hours of the morning, we headed for home. Not long after we had left the beach, I discovered we were nearly out of gas. I

stopped the pickup, filled the tank, and then began a desperate search for my wallet. At first I thought it must have fallen down behind the seat or maybe I'd kicked it out on the road somewhere. After an anxious search, I went into the gas station and informed the cashier that I'd lost my wallet.

"I hear that story every night. You stay right there, I'm calling the police," he said.

I decided I'd punch his lights out and run for it and hope that he wasn't able to note down the number on my license plate. Then sanity prevailed. I asked, "Why don't you phone my dad?" He did and was convinced that my father would pay for the gas. His parting shot at me was, "He seems like a decent man. I don't know where he got you!"

Before the service station attendant could hang up, I grabbed the phone and spoke to my dad with uncharacteristic consideration: "Dad, go to bed. Don't wait up for me; I'm coming home. I just want to go down to the beach to try and find my wallet."

As I started the car, I rushed off a simple, unholy prayer, "God, I want the wallet, all right?" There was no "Dear Father" or "Amen," just a demand. We got back to the beach and began to retrace our steps, eventually arriving at the place where we'd spent most of our time. Running my hand across the sand, I quickly found the wallet. A stroke of luck!

On the way home, I found myself giving in to sleep. Watching the speedometer, mesmerized by it, I caught myself drifting into the curb several times. I begged my girlfriend to talk to me, but by this stage she was exhausted as well, and she lay down across the front seat, her head on my lap, and drifted into deep sleep. I turned the radio off, wound down the window,

sang at the top of my lungs, and continued driving—until there was an almighty BANG. When I regained consciousness, I saw sparks dancing across the hood of the car. I looked down and saw my girlfriend covered in blood. The engine had come right through the firewall into the seat, and appeared to have married itself to her body. I couldn't get out my door, and I couldn't open hers. So I eventually lay on top of her and kicked and kicked until her window exploded. Wriggling through her window, I fell onto the road. Then I struggled to my feet, grabbed her by the legs, pulled her onto the pavement, and dragged her as far away from the crash sight as possible.

People began to flood out of their houses. There weren't any lights, only flashlights. I'd struck a power pole and had knocked out the electricity to the whole area. One of the women who came out was someone that I knew, a nurse from the local Adventist hospital. As I lay there on the ground, bleeding from my head, my arms, and my knee, I looked down and began to realize that my girlfriend had not moved since I pulled her free of the wreck. In desperation, I began to ask, "Is Shirley all right?" "Is my girlfriend all right?" I was assured that she was going to be fine. Then the people removed me away from the scene, propped me up against a tree, and told me to stick a thumb in the side of my head and to put pressure on my knee to stop the bleeding; I'd severed arteries in both places. As I watched, someone brought out a blanket and covered the apparently lifeless form of my girlfriend on the ground.

I began to pray for a second time that night—a prayer of absolute desperation. This time it began in the traditional way, "Dear God..." The desperate realization flooded over me, that I had killed the only person I cared about other than myself. I began to plead with God, but nothing happened. The ambulance arrived, and

the attendants loaded Shirley into it and made me sit beside her. In the darkness, my prayer was even more intense. "Dear God, if You'll do this, then You can have me." What a great deal I was offering God! Looking back I can hardly believe that He would even be interested. At the end of my prayer, however, I heard a shrill, blood-curdling scream, the type that only girls can make. It made my hair stand on end, but it was beautiful. Although Shirley didn't regain consciousness at that moment, I knew that she was alive. I rushed off another prayer, "Thanks, Lord."

When we got to the hospital, the emergency room personnel began to strip away my clothing and shave the hair from the side of my head. I had nearly lost an ear, and my leg was badly damaged. Just before they began the repair work, my father walked in. I wondered who told him where to find me. He asked whether Shirley and I were going to be all right. The surgeons assured him that there seemed to be no life-threatening damage, although she was still not conscious. And then much to my embarrassment, he asked if he could pray. I was so embarrassed, yet as he prayed I felt something changing in me.

Later, I found out what my father had done that night. Usually, when I was out at night, he wouldn't go to sleep until I arrived home. It meant many sleepless hours. But this night, my dad had gone to sleep. He woke up with a start just after 2 a.m., got down on his knees and for the second time that night prayed for his son who was out there somewhere. He tried to turn on the light and found that there was no electricity, then walked to the kitchen and saw that the electric clock had stopped at the same time that he had awakened. He shook my mother awake, and they headed off to find their son. When he passed his pickup wrapped around the pole just 10 miles from home, he drove straight to the hospital, arriving shortly after we did.

Within a few weeks of the accident, my girlfriend had mostly recovered, with just minor scarring. I was released from hospital a little while later. The experience of this wreck was life-changing for me, but I was not back at church. I had not yet submitted to Jesus as Saviour, and I didn't recognize Him as Lord. There was still a long way to go.

One Sabbath after I had returned home, the family had gone to church, leaving me an invitation to join them. As I crawled under an old wreck of a car I was repairing, it dawned on me that I hadn't fulfilled my promise to God. I thought the first step would be to go back to church. I was still angry and didn't want to go, so I hatched a plan that would ensure the church's rejection of me. Unwashed, clad in my leathers, black grease through my hair and on my hands, I mounted my motorcycle and roared off to church. I did a couple of wheelies in the parking lot, a few donuts in the dirt. I

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wanted them to know that I'd arrived. I sauntered into the church, sat down in an empty back seat, and I looked to the front, expecting to see horror and contempt on the faces of the congregation. Instead, I saw tears rolling down my father's cheeks as he sat at the front next to the preacher.

I expected the head deacon, who had two perfect children, to come over and in a loud voice, tell me to leave the church: "You should know better; your father is the elder. What are you doing in church dressed like that?"

I had a mouth full of venom, a heart full of bile. I was going to spew all over him, and then walk out of the church and say "God, see I tried, but they didn't want me." But the deacon didn't come.

The sermon dragged on. Finally the agony ended, and people began to walk down the aisle. They put their hands on my shoulders and told me how good it was to see me in church. This wasn't what I expected, it wasn't what I wanted.

As I walked to the door, I shook hands with my dad. I could see him swallowing hard. He said nothing, but the handshake spoke volumes. I placed my greasy hand in the hand of the pastor, and I could see the start of the reaction I wanted. But he bit his tongue and said nothing.

Then, as I walked down the steps at the front of the church, I saw the deacon coming. He's kept it 'til now, I thought. I was sure he was going to hit me, so I decided to hit him first and then run and hope that the motorcycle would start before the rest of the deacons got to me. But instead of a closed fist, he reached out an open hand. And as he pumped my arm, he told me how thrilled he was that I was back at church. No sooner had he let go of my hand than a little man who stood only as high as my chin, threw his arms around me and began to weep, "Welcome home." He assured me of his prayers and how he had longed for the day that I would come back.

As I stood there, an 18 year old, I felt awkward, embarrassed, but strangely warm. That was my first day back at church, and I have never missed since. It took awhile for God to change my exterior, but His Spirit had really begun to work internally.

It was the unconditional love of my parents and the support of a church that really was family, that understood community and acceptance, which finally broke through my shell of anger and alienation and helped me realize how important I was in the eyes of God.

Barry Gane has spent more than 30 years as youth pastor, teacher, and youth director. He currently directs the Master of Arts in Youth Ministry program at Andrews University. His address: Andrews University; Berrien Springs, Michigan 20904; U.S.A. Email: bgane@andrews.edu. This story is excerpted from the book *We Can Keep Them in the Church*, compiled by Myrna Tetz and Gary L. Hopkins (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 2004).

Grace...

Continued from 29

hospitals, from Alaska to Zimbabwe.

Author Kent Hansen is a Seventh-day Adventist attorney, serving as general counsel for Loma Linda University and Medical Center. The book title refers to a "Damascus-road" event in which the author experienced God's grace in a setting where he least expected it. The book's purpose is "to describe a God who, through Jesus Christ, relentlessly pursues a relationship with men and women in the places where they fall in love, make deals,

raise their children, earn their living, experience pain and loss, build friendships, face temptation and fall, and endure loneliness and broken hearts" (p. 12). The author defines grace as "the power by which we live a life pleasing to God and enjoyable to us as His children," and affirms that this grace is needed now more than ever because, despite material wealth and technological advances, we suffer from stress, a lack of meaningful relationships, and feelings of inadequacy.

Each of the 45 readings is brief (3-4 pages), and Bible quotations are drawn from contemporary versions. While the author offers a curious contemporary interpretation of Mary Magdalene, for the most part he makes more felicitous use of less prominent Bible stories, such as Rizpah's vigil over her sons' bodies (2 Samuel 21: 7-11) and Jesus' request for a donkey and a colt (Matthew 21: 1-7). Novel perspectives of contemporary settings (e.g., a neonatal intensive care unit) bring many readings alive.

Some devotionals include poems by writers as varied as Tagore, Walt Whitman, and the author himself. Others quote lyrics from hymns or authors such as Henri Nouwen, Brendan Manning, Annie Dillard, and Willa Cather. A number of readings conclude with a simple prayer.

Hansen's roles as son, student, father, lawyer, nature-lover, and Christian are evident in the book, and that makes it an enjoyable reading.

Sylvia Rasi Gregorutti (Ph.D., Georgetown University) is Associate Professor and Chair of the Modern Languages Department at Pacific Union College, in California. Her email address: srsi@puc.edu. An excerpt of Kent Hansen's book was published in *Dialogue* 16:1.

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LOGOS

Closed or open doors?

When we open our hearts' doors
and let the Saviour come in, a new life emerges.

by Reuel U. Almocera

We live in a world of closed doors. Doors of opportunity closed because of unemployment, poverty, and illiteracy. Doors of broken relationships, hostility, and ill feelings that cause us to withdraw from each other. Doors of failures and defeats. More importantly, doors that have shut out God by barriers of fear, doubt, and unbelief.

I wish there were none of these—especially none of the last three.

This I know for sure: Our loving Saviour doesn't like closed doors. The Gospels consistently record how Jesus unlocked the closed doors of ordinary people's lives. Consider the magnificent incident recorded in John 20:19, 21, 22. We read: "So when it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst, and said to them 'Peace be with you.'... So Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you: as the Father has sent me, I also send you.' And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"*

Why did the disciples lock the door?

Fear. Fear can close doors. It paralyzes and immobilizes people. It has the force to isolate one into a corner. But the disciples didn't have to be afraid. Early that morning they had seen the empty tomb. They were eyewitnesses to many miracles that He had performed. They saw Jesus feed more than 5,000 people with two

fishes and five loaves. Some of them had seen Him walk over the waves and command the boisterous sea to be still.

Doubt. This is only implied in the text. But the fact that Jesus took the trouble of showing the disciples His nail-pierced hands signifies that all the disciples had yet to be convinced of what was the reality of His resurrection. "What if He really has not risen from the dead? What if we were tricked and fooled?" The disciples must have been brooding over these questions when Jesus appeared to them that Easter evening.

Guilt and shame. It was also possible that the disciples closed the door partly because of guilt and shame. They must have been feeling the pain of failure and remorse because they had let Jesus down. Remember that fateful Thursday evening. Even Peter, probably the most fearless among them, betrayed the Lord.

The disciples froze in fear, entertained doubts, and recounted failures when, suddenly, Jesus came and stood among them. He went through the back door, so to speak, and brought the keys that opened the front door of their lives. Those keys ignited the fire of Christianity during the first century. The same keys are available for us today.

The keys to a fulfilled Christian life

The key of new peace. The door of our lives may be closed by sin, failure, and guilt. We cannot find a decent job because of our so-called track record.

We cannot lift our heads up high because of our checkered past. We cannot perform to the maximum of our capabilities because of hate, frustration, or remorse. To all of us, Jesus says "Peace be with you."

Peace is not the absence of problems. It's not a life without disturbance. True peace comes when the Prince of Peace is in the heart. When Jesus reigns in the center of our lives, we will have peace. It was only when Jesus was in the boat and shouted, "Peace be still" that the disciples were saved from that terrible storm on the Sea of Galilee. It was only when the Gadarean demoniac met Jesus that his wife and children were fully able to open the door to their house and live in peace. It was only when Jesus was present that the wedding celebration in Cana was saved from a big embarrassment.

As He did to the disciples, Jesus came to bring us the key of peace. He is pleading with us now, "Open up the front door" Please don't say, "Sorry, we're closed." Enter into the joy of His salvation, and peace will be with you.

The key of new purpose. Our doors may be closed because of broken relationships. Just as sin makes us hide from God, so fear and hurt make us hide from others. The disciples on that first Easter were ready to isolate themselves from the outside world. To open things up, Jesus brought them the key of new purpose. He said to them, "as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (KJV).

When we have the key of new purpose, we open the door of service and

caring for those who have been hurt by life's broken relationships. We can go out and touch the lives of people with a noble agenda and generous motives. We don't serve because we *want* to be saved. We serve *because* we are saved. We serve simply because God's peace and purpose have been created in us a compelling urge to help others.

The key of new power. Our doors may be locked by failures and self-doubt. Just as sin makes us hide from God and from others, so failure makes us hide from ourselves. Many turn to alcohol, drugs, and even sports to offset that sense of failure. To us all, Jesus brings the key of new power.

Power is one of the most sought-after commodities in this world. People have become heroes because of power. Others have been destroyed by power. There are various kinds of power—coercive, utilitarian, and legitimate.

Coercive power depends on issuing orders and using punishment to force obedience. The military and the police use coercive power as a means of achieving compliance. There is danger in relying wholly on this kind of power because it usually generates alienation, hostility, and anger.

Economic power or utilitarian power uses resources to induce others to conform to expectations. This kind of power produces cooperation and compliance as long as the economic and remunerative rewards continue at satisfying levels. But the use of utilitarian power brings with it the spirit of greed and other problems.

Legitimate power is derived from the position one holds. A well-prepared and dedicated teacher has legitimate power over the students. I was surprised when I gave the first examination to my first class at the graduate school where I teach. It had not occurred to me that I could compel a group of international students (some of them church leaders much older than I) to scramble for paper as I announced an exam. Legitimate

power may be useful, but is not always enough. This kind of power sometimes causes people to resist.

Jesus dispenses spiritual power. The last key Jesus gave to the disciples on that Easter evening was the key of the Holy Spirit. "He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (John 20:22). The Holy Spirit is a powerful key that makes one's life successful in service for God and humanity.

Think of those who were in the locked room that first Easter evening. There was Peter who denied Christ three times. There were James and John who had been bickering about who was going to be the greatest among Jesus' followers. There was also the doubting Thomas. There were nameless women. They had little formal education, if any. But when they received the power of the Holy Spirit, they turned the world upside down.

Jesus is willing to dispense the same power of the Spirit to us all. Have you been reluctant to venture for Christ because of your failures in the past? Have you been too timid to plan greater, grander schemes for Christ, because of self-doubt and fears of failure? To us, Jesus says, "Open the front door. Please don't say, Sorry, we're closed." Experience the wonders of His power.

Conclusion

Life's door of success and fulfillment doesn't have to be closed. Jesus has all the keys. He says: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Luke 11:9, KJV). He also says: "I am the door. If any one enters through Me, he shall be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture" (John 10:9).

However, there is a door that could remain closed. It's the door to our hearts. Today, the same Jesus is pleading: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in

to him and will dine with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20). Let us open the front door of our lives to Him. Any time now, Jesus—the Bridegroom—will come. He will then close all doors of opportunity. And to those who do not have the keys, He will sadly say, "I don't know you. Sorry, we're closed" (see Matthew 25:1-13).

* Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotations in this article are from the New American Standard Bible.

Reuel U. Almocera teaches courses in the field of applied theology at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS). This article is based on Leighton Ford's sermon, "Let's open up the front door." Almocera's mailing address: P.O. Box 038; 4118 Silang, Cavite; Philippines. For more information about AIAS, visit its website: <http://www.aias.edu>.

Mind-body...

Continued from page 14.

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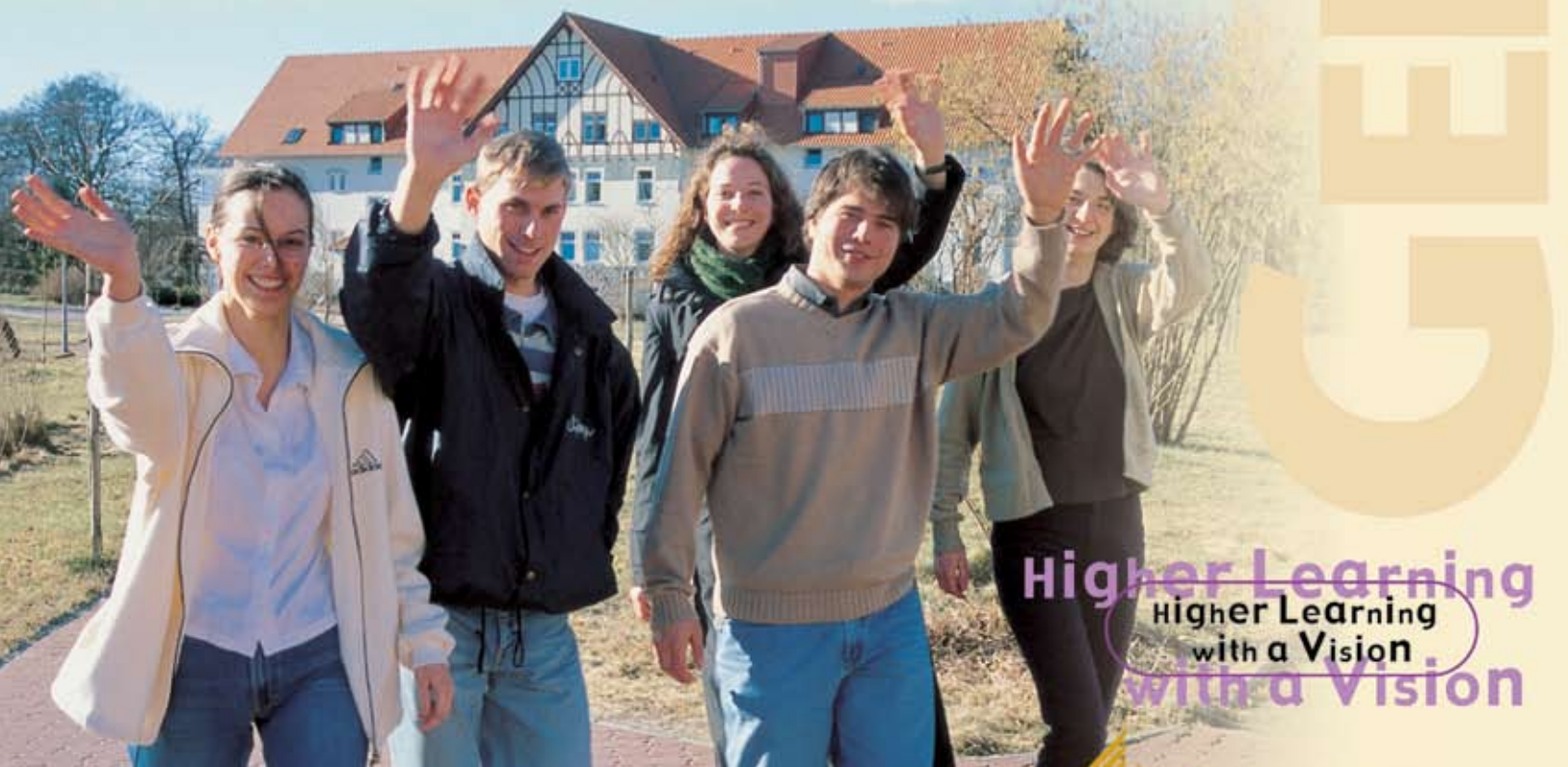
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A Romualdo Costa Portfolio

“Fall in the Rockies” (Acrylic; 76 x 102 cm.) We lived for a few months in Denver, Colorado. This allowed us to visit the Rocky Mountains at different times of the year. The serene beauty of a pristine lake is surrounded by the changing colors of autumn.



“At La Parguera” (Acrylic; 57 x 42 cm.) This was one of our family’s favorite spots on the Caribbean Sea, in southwestern Puerto Rico. I was attracted by the interplay of light and shadows on the dock, with the shimmering sea on the background.



“Tasty Fruit” (Acrylic; 57 x 72 cm.) Many times, I conceive the concept for a painting when I am going to sleep at night or am about to wake up. In this composition, I wanted to depict the various shapes, colors, and textures of fruits that provide for our health.

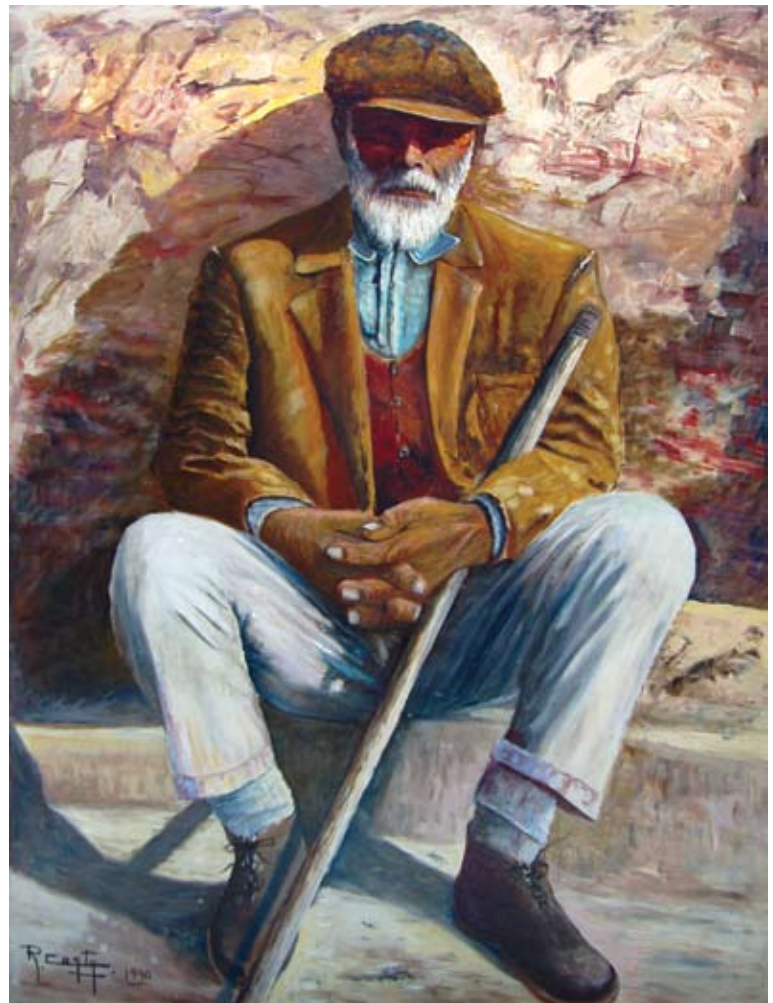
“Lofty Peaks” (Acrylic; 76 x 102 cm.) There is something majestic about mountains, which makes a lasting impression on us. They speak silently about the immense power of God. Here is one angle of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California.



“Faithful Friend” (Acrylic; 92 x 92 cm.) I grew up on my parents’ farm, working with horses. I depicted here one of those noble companions of my youth, delving into his personality. He has served his masters well, and is now enjoying a deserved retirement.



“Old Man at Peace” (Acrylic; 92 x 23 cm.) I recreated here an image that accompanied me for years. There is melancholy and also serenity in this man, as he warms himself in the sun and reflects on his long life.



“Wisdom of the Fisherman” (Acrylic; 92 x 123 cm.) As a boy, I liked to fish in the river that marked the limit of our farm in Uruguay. Years ago, I saw a movie filmed in Venezuela that had a scene on which this painting is based.



“Spring Has Come” (Acrylic; 61 x 77 cm.) The *apamate* is a common tree in the Venezuela countryside. In springtime, its lovely flowers add a touch of soft beauty to the landscape.



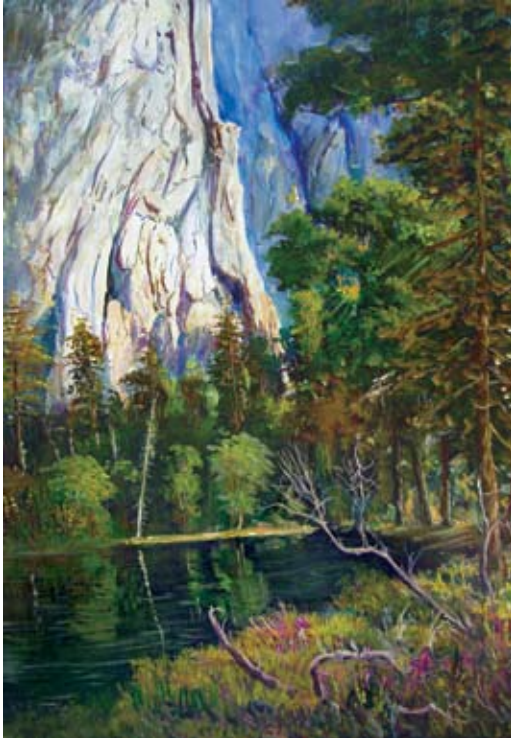
“Seascape” (Acrylic; 76 x 102 cm.) In Venezuela and in Puerto Rico, we lived near the sea, which is always changing. As the sun begins to decline toward the horizon, big clouds cover it, creating scintillating effects on the waves.



“Shaded Road” (Acrylic; 76 x 102 cm.) There are many country roads like this one in Puerto Rico. They seem to beckon us to take a leisurely stroll and lead us to the surprises that await us over the horizon. These roads are a metaphor of our lives.

“El Capitan, Yosemite National Park”

(Acrylic; 52 x 72 cm.) The massive strength of this cliff, carved by glaciers, contrasts with the softness of the wild flowers below.



“River Bend” (Acrylic; 61 x 77 cm.) In this imaginary composition, I brought together my favorite elements—sky, land, and water—and dressed the whole scene with plants, trees, and flowers.



“Christ’s Chapel”
(Acrylic; 52 x 72 cm.) This small chapel, located near the walls of old San Juan, is a favorite site for both residents and tourists in Puerto Rico. It preserves rich memories of colonial times.

