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Finding “THE ONE”!

**Design in nature:
Millennia of arguments**

**The truth search:
A Christian response**

Worship as adoration

**The tenderness
of His love**

2

Volume 20

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EDITORIAL

Cultural critics

How does one live in the world without assimilating worldly values? In His longest recorded prayer (John 17), Jesus sends us into the world but warns us not to be part of the world. Instead we are invited to collaborate in the work of redemption.

“Culture is sick,” a colleague recently told me. “Culture needs to be redeemed,” he continued. His comment reminded me of what the Christian sociologist and cultural critic, Tony Campolo, said during a chapel on an Adventist campus. Campolo’s introductory remarks challenged me personally. “I’m glad to be back again,” he said, surveying the audience as if he was looking for someone. Then he said, “I used to come to an Adventist campus, and I knew I was on an Adventist campus. You used to look so counter-cultural. But now you look like everyone else. What happened?”

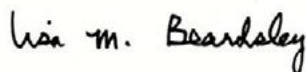
I don’t want to place undue emphasis on externals like dress, jewelry, or other displays of affluence or rebellion, but are you counter-cultural at the core? Are you able to swim upstream when you should? Or are you absorbing popular culture by osmosis through the media, iPod and Internet?

As I visit different churches around the world from Australia to Zimbabwe, I have observed the widespread use of the Praise and Worship style of music. The digital age has created a homogenous music culture around the world, right down to the way the worship leaders grip the microphone and raise their hands as the congregation stands for song after song, singing from words projected on a screen. It’s as if a state of global musical entropy has been reached.

In this issue of *Dialogue*, Daniel Plenc unpacks the pivotal issue of who and how we worship while Alain Coralie takes this on in a practical way. Coralie provides guidelines so that those of you who lead worship can ensure the music is theologically grounded and truly an A.C.T. (adoration, confession, and thanksgiving) of worship. Please understand, I am not attacking the music per se, but rather, the uncritical adoption of it.

How to evaluate popular culture and the media is especially important when you study at a secular campus. The purpose of becoming a discerning cultural critic is redemptive. That means we not bash our opponents with damning criticism for “the weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4, 5 NIV). To do this, you will find helpful information in befriending people of other faiths in the article by Eugene Zaitsev and in the Profile of Ganoune Diop who coordinates five inter-faith resource centers.

What we as Christian cultural critics are called upon to do is twofold: first, to be sure that we ourselves are not bewitched by culture’s cynical and silent attacks on Christian values, and, second, to help break its spell over others. To do this, it is imperative that we use our heads. To mindlessly ape music videos and call that worship isn’t good enough for God. He wants rational worship offered by those who worship Him because they want to. It requires creativity, intelligence, and courage to live, worship and witness in a counter-cultural, mindful way. See the **First Person** section in this issue where Christy Sanggalan-Doroy shares how she kept her faith when faced with challenges and the **Action Reports** from Ghana and Spain that demonstrate how to be in the world and not of it, so that the world dearly loved by God might be saved.



– Lisa M. Beardsley, Editor-in-Chief

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Finding “THE ONE”!

by Carol M. Tasker

Getting to know God is the most natural and comfortable thing to do. But how?

A “special friend” wasn’t on my agenda. I’d worked hard to earn my school fees to become a teacher. My dorm mate had a boyfriend of long standing, and said I needed one too. I was scared of boys. I was the youngest of four girls – with no brothers. Watching others with special friends, I sensed I was missing out on something. When they spoke about their boyfriends, I described my imaginary boyfriend. But a make-believe relationship is a poor substitute for the real thing.

Then it happened. I “fell in love” with a very impressive student. He looked good, spoke well in public, had a great smile, and was an active Christian, which was important to me. But how do you start a friendship with someone whom you don’t know and who doesn’t know you? My helpful dorm mate said I needed to be around when he was, maybe talk casually to him, and just be friendly, but that was almost impossible for me. I was scared that if I talked to him, he would find out what I was really like – just a shy, plain girl, and that would be the end of it. So for the next few months, I lived in a make-believe world, imagining Josh as my boyfriend, but I never spoke to him, and he never became my special friend. I was so scared of him getting to know me, that when

I saw him walking to the cafeteria, I would go in the other direction to avoid him!

A year later, I started to enjoy the company of David, who later became my husband. Unlike the previous pretend relationship, this one was real and based on open communication. The process of getting to know each other without shame or pretence seemed to be the most natural and enjoyable thing in the world.

Getting to know God was also meant to be the most natural and comfortable thing to do. But where to start? A few years ago, a group of 120 university students from 40 countries started out on an adventure. During the 10-week course, and for the next two years, the participants were researched, and 2,100 pages of data collected.¹

Retreat handouts

Part 1: God’s hand in my history – Perusing the past

1. After asking God for His guidance, read carefully Isaiah 49:1-7 a number of times.
2. *Then.* Who is the one called in vs. 3 “my servant” and “Israel” (literally “God strives”)? Note carefully what is said here about this servant’s past. In what ways has God worked for the servant in the past? Has this servant always been what he or she should have been (note vs. 4)? Write down all the ways God has acted in the history of His servant.
3. *Now.* Can you identify with the servant? Did God call you from the womb and name you (vs. 1)? Have you ever “labored in vain” or “spent your strength for nothing” (vs. 4, RSV)? Has God worked in your past? Sit quietly, perhaps with eyes closed, and recall your past pilgrimage. Re-enter your past and trace those key points where God has acted for you. Recall even those times when you weren’t sure where God was. Write down as much as you can of your personal specific story of God’s work in your past.

“We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.” – Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, p. 196.

Part 2: God’s hand in my history – Pondering the present

1. Pray for God’s guidance and read thoughtfully Psalm 139:1-24.
2. *Then.* Make a list of all the things the Psalmist says God knows about his present life. What does this lead him to think and do? Ponder the awesomeness of God’s knowledge. How do you think the realization of God’s knowing all this affected the Psalmist’s present life and decisions?
3. *Now.* Sensing that God knows all about us, what do you think would be His evaluation of your present life? Picture yourself in God’s presence. Knowing that He knows all about you, yet loves you, honestly face your present. Write down what you think is His as well as your evaluation of your present. Where are you now?
4. *Write down* three things that you think God would like you to work on in your spiritual life this coming year. Begin with one thing directly related to your devotional life or relationship with God. Next, write down a second thing related to human relationships – a spouse, child, parent, friend, sibling, etc. Lastly, write down something that has to do with your relation to the physical realm – diet, exercise, addictions, use of time, recreation, etc.

Part 3: God’s hand in my history – Facing the future

1. Ask for God’s direction as you read carefully Isaiah 55.
2. *Then.* What things are specifically promised to Israelites who seek the Lord (note especially vs. 10-13)? Look again at the promises found in Isaiah 49:6, 7. Write down the promises from these two passages in a list and think about them. Try to sense how a discouraged Israelite would have felt when he or she read them.
3. *Now.* Relax in quietness in God’s presence. Meditate on some of the things you’d like to see God do in your future. Claim some of these promises for yourself. Don’t worry about impure motives. God can help you deal with these later.
4. Allow yourself to dream what might take place by God’s power in your life. What would you like to see happen? Write down your hopes, dreams, and plans for your future.

“If the future looks somewhat clouded, hope on, believe on. The clouds will disappear, and light shine again.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 663.

— Jon Dybdahl, *Personal Spiritual Formation* class. Used by permission.

It was found that students grew personally and spiritually in many different ways. They were grateful for life-changing attitudes, perceptions, and habits. This class gave them the chance to get to know God personally, to see how He acts, and in the process they learned a lot about themselves and others. Many regarded this class as the highlight of their university experience. A combination of four factors contributed to this outcome.

Factor 1: The day retreat

The class began with a day retreat, with three specially-chosen Bible passages for personal reflection and journaling. Students saw God's involvement in their past, present, and future. For 45 minutes, they individually read the first passage, asked God for His guidance, then reflected and wrote down their thoughts. This was followed for the next 45 minutes by sharing in groups of four same-gender students. This format was repeated for the other two passages. (See sidebar for retreat passages and questions.)

A new picture of God

The role of the Holy Spirit as teacher and guide cannot be underestimated. By the end of the day, a new picture of God was emerging. Many felt that for the first time in their lives, God had spoken to them personally. Some were impressed with aspects of God's character that describe His dealings with humankind – His graciousness, goodness, generosity, patience, sharing, and love, while others were grateful for His saving acts of redemption, mercy, restoration, and forgiveness. Some focused on present relational aspects of His character – “He knows me, accepts me, thinks about me, understands me, is interested in me, and is my friend.” Others traced the long-term, personal interest that God has had in their lives. Still others gained a new appreciation for the greatness of God as they contemplated the attributes of immensity. In

almost all cases, these attributes were described in the context of His personal interest and involvement with humankind.

In response to their new view of God, students spoke of a longing to celebrate life with Him, wanting to draw closer to God, and frequently mentioned their sense of need to spend more time with God, to reflect on His goodness, to accomplish His purpose, to cultivate His friendship, to abide in His presence, and to trust Him more. Thus the students were ready to learn more about developing authentic two-way communication with God.

Factor 2: Learning about “relationship enhancers”

The class lectures that followed the retreat gave practical examples of how to incorporate a variety of devotional practices into a daily relationship with God. These practices are often called “spiritual disciplines,” but the term can be misleading. Since special friends never refer to time set aside for each other as a “discipline” and since the purpose of engaging in these practices is to build the relationship, I prefer to use the term “relationship enhancers.” (See sidebar for a description of these). Jon Dybdahl's *Hunger: Satisfying the Longing of Your Soul*² describes these devotional habits in more detail, giving many practical ways of incorporating them into your daily devotional time.

As a result of learning new ways to spend time with God, boring worship turned into times of anticipation and joy. New concepts of God invigorated and refreshed corporate worship so that instead of being a ritual to endure, worship became a Person to adore. Instead of passive attendance at a church service, worship was seen as an active gift of gratitude brought by those who know Him.

Factor 3: Practicing the “relationship enhancers”

Students were asked to set aside a minimum of three hours per week

Some relationship enhancers

1. **Prayer:** communicating with God – talking and listening.
2. **Meditation:** thinking about God and His character.
3. **Worship:** adoring God – rejoicing in the relationship and responding with gratitude.
4. **Bible study:** learning about God.
5. **Simplicity:** arranging life around a few consistent purposes.
6. **Fasting:** choosing to focus special attention on God by intentionally relinquishing some activities, food, or belongings that could become a distraction or hindrance.
7. **Solitude:** delighting in the presence of God without any other human beings.
8. **Silence:** sharing time with God without the intrusion of verbal conversation.
9. **Confession:** being honest with God and maybe trusted others to know one's deepest needs and weaknesses so they can provide support and encourage accountability.
10. **Service:** working for God; giving loving gifts of service to His children.
11. **Guidance:** seeking God's leadership and recognizing God's lordship in all areas of life.
12. **Journaling:** keeping a record of the journey with one's best friend.

Let's talk!

Do you want to send a comment or a question to Pastor Jan Paulsen, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church? You can do it through:

www.letstalk.adventist.org

The Web site's goal is to foster communication between young Adventists around the world and the office of the General Conference president. You'll also find useful links and a searchable database of questions and answers on many topics at the same site. Check it out!

Where to start

1. Decide to jump into the water!
2. Tell God where you are at the moment – He knows, but it helps for you to admit it to yourself and to Him, since the best relationships are based on openness and honesty. Remember, God is more interested in your future than your past, and He specializes in extreme makeovers.
3. Form a small group of friends who are also interested in making this journey. You can also start solo or with just one other person.
4. Ask God to direct you to a book of the Bible that you can slowly go through a few verses each day. For each verse, ask:
 - What does this verse teach me about God?
 - What does it teach me about me?
 - What difference will it make in my life, my decisions, my choices, my relationships?
5. Decide on the amount of time you would like to reserve for God on a weekly basis to develop your friendship with Him. Keep track of how closely your desire is matching reality (this is for your benefit to see how things are going).
6. Begin journaling with the first passage, and ask God to personally speak to you. Write down the thoughts He gives you, as well as your own thoughts, questions, and reactions.
7. Read a book on spiritual disciplines like Jon Dybdahl's *Hunger*, or Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline* and learn about the joys and freedoms that come with practicing these relationship enhancers.
8. At the beginning of each week, make a plan of what devotional practices you would like to include in your special time with God.
9. Make a list of the names/characteristics of God. Each day, choose one as a focus of worship.
10. These are suggestions to make space in your life for nurturing a relationship with God. Relax and enjoy His presence. If you miss or forget a day, start again. He delights in your company and is looking forward to reconnecting with you.
11. When the devil reminds you of your past, remind him of his future!

for developing their relationship with God. They were to choose a Bible book and meditate on one or two verses each day. As they wrote their new perceptions of God, students also began to see themselves in new and different ways. With honesty and authenticity, they saw their superficial, defective lives. Yet, at the same time, they spoke of renewed confidence from God's presence and promises that "despite defects and folly, if I keep my eyes on Him, He will show me the way and change my heart."

Despite some initial resistance to the recording of their devotional time each week, many testified to its value in terms of uncovering self-deception and encouraging habits of consistency. At the end of the class, many participants acknowledged that this daily practice had now become a permanent habit, and that the motive had changed from getting a grade to spending time with their best friend. Even having a weekly devotional plan was seen to be beneficial, as a previously "sporadic, hurried, unplanned activity became a joyful time which is planned and time-tabled."

Factor 4: Sharing in small groups

The small groups helped to keep students on track with prayerful support, encouragement, and accountability. The weekly group meeting became a welcome respite from the frantic pace of university life, as the larger picture of life with God was reflected upon, and personal goals and dreams were shared. Since spiritual journaling is not easy in the beginning, some persistence may be necessary, and dialoguing with others regarding the process often helps.

Conclusion

Students respond to different spiritual formation experiences in different ways, which may be related to personal spiritual temperament,³ yet there is no substitute for setting aside planned time for communicating with God.

Among many other findings, it was found that previous struggles with witnessing disappeared once people knew how to spend time with God, because they now had a firsthand experience to share with others.

A relationship with God or finding that "special friend" does not come automatically.

Those who enjoy swimming will tell you that their love of the water did not come by listening to others talk about their experience; it resulted from jumping into water and getting wet! Similarly, talking about a relationship with God is not the same as getting to know Him. Why not start today?

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NOTES

1. C. M. Tasker, *The Impact of Intentional Learning Experiences for Spiritual Formation on Seminary Students*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, 2001, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.
2. Jon Dybdahl, *Hunger: Satisfying the Longing of Your Soul* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 2008).
3. G. Thomas, *Sacred Pathways* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2000). Thomas describes nine different sacred pathways, which seem to influence the types of activities people enjoy in relating to God.

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Design in nature: Millennia of arguments

by Timothy G. Standish

The recent resurgence of design arguments, coupled with an explosive accumulation of knowledge about the complexity of life and elegance in the universe, suggest that the design inference faces a robust future.

Let's begin with the atom. According to the ancient Greeks, everything is made up of atoms. When an object is continually split, there comes a point where no more splitting is possible, and that unsplitable unit is called an atom.

Democritus (460-370 B.C.) was fascinated with atoms. Among the most important doctrines Democritus left was: "That atoms and the vacuum were the beginning of the universe; and that everything else existed only in opinion."¹ By "opinion," Democritus may have meant something more than merely a throwaway sentiment, but he still places the majority of what is experienced on a different epistemological level than the theoretical level. In other words, according to him, the theoretical atoms and vacuum are more real than the reality experienced through the senses.

One of Democritus' followers, Epicurus, further formalized and expanded this line of thinking. Epicurus made such a thorough work of it that his atomism-derived philosophy is given its own name: Epicureanism. This philosophy caused agitation in ancient Greece because it denied body-soul dualism, seeming to deny the very order of the universe

and even the existence of the gods. Epicurus was accused of atheism, a charge he vigorously denied. He claimed that to be holy and perfect requires gods to remain in perfect bliss, an impossibility for any being that interacts with the clearly imperfect material world.

By making the gods so perfect that they never interact with the material world, Epicurus rendered them irrelevant to material beings. If there is no immortal soul, there is no divine judgment to face after death, then for all practical purposes what is taken in through the senses is the only knowable reality. Ultimately, the philosophy of the atomists collapsed into the extreme reductionism and empiricism evident today in the sciences.

Atomism did not arise in a vacuum; it responded to the philosophy of Parmenides, who claimed that it is impossible for something to come from nothing. From this, he reasoned that change must merely be an illusion and thus that reality is a single unchanging whole. Atomists argued that genuine change is possible by rearrangement of unchanging atoms.

Plato, another student of Parmenides, followed a different line of reasoning. Instead of reducing all reality to atoms, Plato argued for the existence of the gods on the basis of design evident in nature. For example, in *Laws X*, Plato argued that the gods must exist because "the earth and the sun, and the stars and the universe, and the fair order of the seasons, and the division of them into years and months, furnish proofs of their existence."²

Aristotle developed this design argument further. Instead of questioning the existence of atoms, Aristotle argued that atoms alone cannot achieve what the Epicureans claimed; atoms do not move by themselves, and thus ultimately require something to move

them if they are going to arrange themselves in different ways to achieve change. Material movers must react to the motion they cause and thus God, the "Prime Mover," must be an immaterial cause. This immaterial cause, Aristotle deduced, is "Logos."

Epicureans were not convinced of the necessity of the Logos. About 55 B.C., the Roman poet and popularizer of Epicurean philosophy Titus Lucretius Carus eloquently outlined a story of evolution that excluded the action of gods:

"The atoms did not intend to intelligently place themselves in orderly arrangement, nor did they negotiate the motions they would have, but many atoms struck each other in numerous ways, carried along by their own momentum from infinitely long ago to the present. Moving and meeting in numerous ways, all combinations were tried which could be tried, and it was from this process over huge space and vast time that these combining and recombining atoms eventually produced great things, including the earth, sea, and sky, and the generation of living creatures."³

To be sure that his readers understood that everything, including the living creatures, resulted from natural and not supernatural causes, Lucretius explicitly stated this several times in his *De Rerum Natura*: "Nature can be seen to be free of overlords. Everything she does is completely by herself, without help from gods."⁴

Lucretius' arguments against gods followed formulas commonly used today. For example, he argued that reality is imperfect and thus can't have been designed: "The world was certainly not made for us by divine power: so great are the faults with which it stands endowed."⁵ In more recent times, Stephen J. Gould put the argument this way: "Imperfection carries the day for evolution."⁶

New Testament and design

Immersed in a society permeated with pagan design arguments, the Apostle John began his Gospel with, “In the beginning was the Word (Logos).” By invoking the Logos, John placed his thesis squarely within the domain of public design arguments and their theological implications. His approach, however, is quite different from the philosophers. Rather than attempting to argue from first principles or some preconceived idea of what the gods are like, John makes an extremely empirical argument. “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14, KJV). John insisted that his readers review the empirical evidence and decide for themselves whether or not his thesis, that the creator became part of the creation, was true; a truly scandalous proposition at the time.

The Apostle Paul took a different approach. For him, the presence of design in nature is self-evident. Thus in Romans 1:20 he appears to make a direct appeal to design: “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.” (KJV). When addressing Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in Athens, Paul begins his argument with an appeal to creation by addressing the question of causes and proposing the “unknown god” as the ultimate cause. This was a form of argument familiar to his audience, but when he proposed that God became flesh, he immediately lost them, as this claim was beyond what their ideas of the divine could accommodate (see Acts 17:18-34).

The ultimate power of the Apostles’ arguments rested not on philosophy but on their testimony as witnesses to the divinity, death, and resurrection of the Designer Himself. The gospel rested on a broad foundation of direct

experience with Jesus Christ. This empirical approach appears to have had broad appeal compared to the complex and subtle arguments either for or against the presence of design in nature.

But Christianity could not indefinitely depend on the firsthand testimony of witnesses to the life of Christ. The witnesses ultimately died, some leaving written accounts of their experiences. More written accounts were produced by those who did not have firsthand experience, diluting and sometimes corrupting the eyewitness evidence. Proliferation of Gnostic gospels confused the issue, weakening the impact of arguments based on direct observation. Some progress was made when Irenæus encouraged use of the four canonical Gospels around 185 A.D.

As the medieval Western church moved away from direct dependence on the biblical cannon, and Christians sought to interact with pagans, they faced a problem. The Bible could not be expected to have authority in the minds of pagans, and missionaries lacked firsthand knowledge of the life of Christ. Philosophical arguments used by the pagans substituted for direct testimony and became the common language by which Christians hoped to reach pagan minds.

Aquinas’ argument for design

Platonism, with its inherent design arguments, became the philosophy of the church. It was not until Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century that Aristotle was popularized in the Western church. Given the move away from the Scriptures during medieval times and the popularity of pagan philosophers, it is hardly surprising that Aquinas would embrace Aristotle’s philosophical arguments for gods and turn them into arguments for God.

In his *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas proposed five arguments for the existence of God.⁷ The first is Aristotle’s argument for a Prime Mover. The sec-

ond involves efficient causes. It states that nothing can be the cause of itself, thus nature cannot be the cause of itself and requires a Designer-God to create it. Third is the necessary cause argument. Because there are a finite number of things and things have a finite existence, Aquinas argued, in infinite time there must occur a point where nothing exists. But because things require a cause, the existence of things makes a cause necessary, and that necessary cause is God. The fourth argument assumes the great chain of being in which different beings are distributed from the lowest to the highest along various scales of goodness, truth, and so on. Aquinas argued that because all gradations ultimately emanate from the ultimate state of being, like fire being the ultimate state of heat causing all grades of warmth, an Ultimate Being – God – must exist to account for the various grades of being we see.

Aquinas’ fifth argument for God’s existence is clearly teleological and the most subject to empirical examination. It can be seen as both harking back to Plato’s claim that the order of the heavens proves the existence of God and pointing forward to modern design arguments. In essence the argument posits that even inanimate things exist for a purpose and purpose is the product of intelligence, thus the purpose fits with the design of an intelligent being and that intelligent designer is God.

Hume’s arguments against design

Aquinas’ arguments were widely accepted until the Enlightenment, when skeptical philosophers like David Hume (1711-1776) directly attacked Aquinas’ Aristotle-inspired proofs of God. Hume’s thinking was founded on a different view of causation, “We have no other notion of cause and effect, but that of certain objects, which have been always conjoined together, and which in all past instances have been found inseparable. We cannot pen-

erate into the reason of the conjunction.”⁸ By reworking thinking about causes, Hume changed the field of intellectual battle from the one that Aristotle had constructed based on his four causes. Moving on under conditions more favorable to his own position, Hume directed his skepticism at the design argument.

Hume’s five classic arguments against design, listed below, are still among the most commonly expressed objections to design arguments.⁹

1. Because nature is observed producing ordered things like crystals without an obvious intelligent agent to cause them, it is illogical to claim that all ordered things or objects with apparent purpose imply an intelligent agent like God.

2. Because we have only one universe to study, we can’t compare a designed one to an undesigned one; it is a false analogy to say that because we can recognize designed versus undesigned phenomena within the universe we can also recognize that the universe itself is designed.

3. Even if the universe does appear to be designed, this does not logically lead to theism. Says Hume: “Were an effect presented, which was entirely singular, and could not be comprehended under any known species, I do not see, that we could form any conjecture or inference at all concerning its cause.”¹⁰

4. If the universe requires design, then the mind that designed it must require at least as much design and thus also requires a designer who must be designed and so on *ad infinitum*. Alternatively, if the designer, God, can be self-ordered, then why not the universe?

5. Frequently, apparent design for a purpose may be just as well explained by a filtering process rather than a teleological one.

Hume’s fifth argument can be fairly interpreted as foreshadowing Charles Darwin’s natural selection acting as a filter on natural variation to pro-

duce apparently designed organisms. During the period between Hume and Darwin, philosophers like Immanuel Kant vigorously reacted to Hume’s arguments. Ironically, Hume’s skepticism is commonly referred to as empiricism, but his anti-design arguments are philosophical rather than empirical and probably best categorized as rationalism.

Kant: The reconciliation of empiricism and rationalism

This brings up Kant’s effort to reconcile empiricism and rationalism. If any trend is evident in the development of design and anti-design arguments, it is that design arguments tend to be more empirical while anti-design arguments, like those made by Hume, tend toward rationalism. Obviously there are many exceptions to this, with Lucretius arguing for bad design based on observation of nature and Aquinas using clearly rational arguments, but the trend is still clear. For example, Plato appeals to the order in the heavens while Epicurus defines the gods into irrelevance. Kant argued that empirical sciences have greater epistemological strength than rational arguments.¹¹

While Hume’s philosophical arguments against design were met with counter-philosophical arguments, they were also met by more direct appeals to evidence. Possibly the most famous of these is found in William Paley’s (1743-1805) *Natural Theology*. Paley argued from the analogy that a “watch must have had a maker,”¹² that machine-like things in nature also require a Maker. He tested his analogy using different human-built devices, for example a telescope, with related phenomena observed in nature, in this case an eye.¹³

Darwin and the design argument

Charles Darwin (1809 – 1882) was a keen student of Paley’s books, which were used as texts at Cambridge University, and claims to have been

“delighted” and “charmed” by his works.¹⁴ However, Darwin’s best-known work, *On the Origin of Species*, was a direct response to Paley’s arguments. By invoking natural selection as a filter of naturally occurring variation within organisms, Darwin sought to show that while organisms are built as if purposefully designed, “the purpose is only an apparent one.”¹⁵

At this point in the development of design arguments, a fragmentation between arguments from nature to design and from design to God becomes clear. Darwin’s approach was clearly against arguing from nature to an intelligent cause for life. The irony is that his position ultimately relies on certain theological premises and not on the copious data he brings to bear on the question. Darwin’s argument attempts to address the theological problem of evil, particularly evil in nature. As Cornelius Hunter put it, “The whole point of Darwin’s theory was to separate God from the world in order to explain its inefficiencies and quandaries. He couldn’t then smuggle God back into the theory to explain complexity. Rather than saying that evolution is antireligious, it would be more accurate to say that evolution is religious. It very much hinges on a particular type of God – one who would only create a world suited to our tastes.”¹⁶

Darwin’s theory of evolution had profound theological implications and thus attracted immediate theological rejoinders, but opposition to his theory also arose for scientific reasons. For example, the adequacy of natural selection to account for what we see in organisms was called into question almost immediately by Thomas Henry Huxley, a major supporter of Darwin, who argued that “the logical foundation of the theory of natural selection is incomplete.”¹⁷ Darwin himself noted that reasonable scientific objections to his theory were evident, making specific reference to the fossil record: “Geology assuredly does not reveal any

such finely graduated organic chain [of intermediate varieties]; and this, perhaps, is the most obvious and gravest objection which can be urged against my theory.”¹⁸

Rise of intelligent design

Within the milieu of theological, philosophical, and scientific arguments raised against Darwinism, design arguments did not immediately differ from those used by Paley: the very arguments that Darwin claimed to have debunked. Recently, however, a resurgence of design arguments has occurred in the form of the Intelligent Design (ID) movement. Three players in this movement – Phillip Johnson, William Dembski and Michael Behe – exemplify three major components of modern design arguments.

Phillip Johnson, professor emeritus of law at University of California Berkley and an expert logician, is sometimes referred to as the father of the ID movement. His devastat-

ing philosophical attack on the logical underpinnings of Darwinism and exposure of its underlying materialistic presuppositions, first published in *Darwin on Trial*,¹⁹ exposed the vulnerability of Darwin’s thesis.

The philosopher and mathematician William Dembski has directly addressed Hume’s claim that order produced by intelligent design cannot be distinguished from order produced by nature acting alone. Dembski has proposed that objects exhibiting both complexities unlikely to be produced by nature acting alone and specification, fitting within tight tolerances required for their function, can be reasonably interpreted as products of intelligent design rather than some natural product. Dembski argues that, while allowing for some unguided variation, the complex specified information encoded within DNA is most reasonably inferred to be the product of an intelligent design rather than a natural cause.

Michael Behe, a biochemist, has chosen to challenge Darwin directly, addressing Darwin’s claim that: “If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down.”²⁰ Behe argues that molecular machines exist within cells that are “irreducibly complex,” meaning that they require a set of indispensable parts to function altogether and thus could not be reasonably expected to come into existence by “slight modifications.”

A huge amount of change has occurred over the more than two millennia since the time of Democritus. Design arguments that he and his intellectual offspring eschewed have gone through many iterations, experiencing periods of great success and times of decline, but have never been dealt a deathblow. In fact, they continue to thrive. The recent resurgence of design arguments, coupled with an explosive accumulation of knowledge about the molecular complexity of life and elegance in the universe life inhabits, suggest that the design inference faces a robust future.

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Continued on page 16

The truth search: A Christian response

by John Wesley Taylor V

In a postmodern world that questions the relevancy of truth, how does a Christian affirm that truth indeed is?

Postmodernism has announced the demise of objective truth. While modernism was founded on the premise that truth is achievable and verifiable, postmodernism maintains that truth is either a subjective social construction or that there is simply no such thing as attainable truth.¹ Jean-François Lyotard proposed, for example, that truth is but an expression of the perspective of a given community.² What individuals envision and accept as truth is thus dependent on the group in which they participate. This relativity extends beyond one's perceptions of truth to its essence – a stance in which “there is no absolute truth.”³

Michel Foucault, a sociologist whose contributions figure prominently in the postmodern shift, posits that the concept of truth itself is dangerous.⁴ He asserts that “truths” are merely the agendas of special-interest groups with economic clout or political power, who use these ideas – packaged as advertising, propaganda, or mass media – to bully others into believing whatever the privileged find convenient. Finally, other postmodernists, such as Richard Rorty,⁵ argue that we should give up the search for truth altogether and be content with interpretation.

Consequently, for many postmodernists, truth has become elusive, a personal commodity at best. They prefer to think of “many truths,” a “diversity of truths,” or simply “truth for me.” Furthermore, postmodernism seems to be hostile to any perspective that clings to the existence of objective truth or rests on the idea of universal truth.

By contrast, the Christian world-view holds that God is trustworthy (1 Corinthians 1:9), and that His revelation of truth is objective and reliable (John 17:17; 2 Peter 1:19). God-centered truth is thus universal in scope – stable across time, place, and person (Matthew 5:18; Hebrews 13:8).*

At a time when postmodernism was but beginning to evolve, Harry Blamires warned that “one of the crucial tasks in reconstituting the Christian mind will be to re-establish the status of objective truth as distinct from personal opinion.”⁶ In this article, we will analyze the inadequacy of representative secular criteria for truth and seek to identify a Christian response to the truth search. We will also explore a number of implications of the Christian perspective, such as the unity and universality of truth. Finally, we highlight several issues that are closely linked to the search for truth.

Tell me the truth! – The limits of secular criteria

“What is truth?” (John 18:38). Pilate's query has echoed through the corridors of time. It has become increasingly relevant in a world of growing confusion – a world steeped in strife and stereotypes, a planet concerned with relevance and rubbish.

From seamy alleys of the metropolis to cloistered towers of learning, one encounters a number of frequently-offered truth criteria:

1. Tradition. *“It's been that way for a very long time...”* We realize, of course, that a tradition must have a beginning. How did that first person know what was true? Ancient error does not become present truth through mere repetition.

2. Popularity. *“Well, everyone agrees...”* Is the majority always right? There was a time when “everyone” believed that the Earth was the center of the universe. Another time, all but eight people believed that it could never rain. If we depend on opinion

polls to assure us of truth, we run the risk of surrendering to the whims of the largest crowd, or of the group making the loudest noise.

3. Instinct. *“Can't you see? It's obvious...”* Thomas Jefferson once declared that “all men are created equal” and called it a self-evident truth. It was not all that evident, however, to King George back in England or to slave holders among Jefferson's own friends. There is an even more fundamental problem, however, with the “follow-your-heart” approach: The heart can be deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9). If humans are inherently error-prone, can their instincts constitute an infallible guide to truth?

4. Emotion. *“I feel so very strongly that this is truth!”* What happens, however, when two people feel strongly about the same thing, but hold opposite opinions? With each side taking a stance that explicitly excludes the other, it would seem that both cannot be entirely correct. It is also altogether too easy for emotion to degenerate into mere wish fulfillment: “This simply must be true because I like it.”

5. Pragmatism. *“But it works...”* Something may indeed work right, but is it necessarily right just because it works? Should we, for example, use deception in advertising in order to market a product? Does the fact that our marketing scheme worked make our misleading statements true? If one were to accept this criterion, truth could become merely a function of expediency.

6. Empirical Evidence. *“It's supported by research and it's scientifically sound...”* Do we truly perceive what is out there, or could it be that we see “in a mirror, dimly” (1 Corinthians 13:12)? Could appearances, at times, be deceiving (1 Samuel 16:7)? We might also ask if all of the evidence is ever in. Might we know only “in part” (1 Corinthians 13:9), and could this partial knowledge lead us to faulty conclusions?

7. Coherence. *“Everything is so con-*

sistent. *It just comes together so beautifully...*” What if we were to start out with a false premise? Would our beautiful harmony make us dead wrong? Furthermore, is it possible to “force the evidence”? By persistent blows, could we eventually force a square peg through a round hole? Consistency does not, of itself, establish the truth of a statement. It simply allows that the belief may be internally possible.

8. Logic. *“However, it sounds reasonable...”* Could logic become a systematic way of going wrong with confidence? In a syllogism, for example, the truthfulness of the conclusion depends upon the truth of its premises. The problem is that these axioms are often quite difficult to test. We assume that they are true, but we cannot use logic to demonstrate that they are so.⁷ The outcome? If our assumptions are in doubt, we cannot be certain about our conclusions. There is, of course, yet another side to the matter of logic. Just because one does not understand something does not preclude it from being true.⁸

9. Relevance. *“It’s all so meaningful...”* If one takes this position, truth becomes quite relative. The pertinence of today may easily become the irrelevance of tomorrow. Furthermore, might error appear to be relevant? Let’s suppose that a close relative suddenly became ill and passed away before you could see her once more. Someone who was present, however, tells you that in her last moments, your relative mentioned you by name. Would that be meaningful? What if it is a complete fabrication, with the misguided intent to console you?

10. Authority. *“He surely ought to know!”* Who is going to be the authority? How does that individual know, after all? Obviously, not from authority, because he or she *is* the authority! As we have seen, however, each of the other criteria has a fatal flaw. Can any person then be considered infallible?

At this point, we may feel like Thomas: we don’t know anything for

certain! (cf. John 14:5). It is important, however, to keep things in perspective. Before anyone abruptly discards these 10 measures, we should note that each is of value and can contribute toward a better understanding of truth. (How many of us, for example, have actually checked to see if the Earth is a sphere?) The point, nonetheless, is that not one of these criteria, in and of itself, can guarantee truth.

There is an even greater problem, however. All too frequently, we, as Christians, have accepted as truth criteria “a frame of reference constructed by the secular mind and a set of criteria reflecting secular evaluations.”⁹ Clearly, a Christian response to the truth search is urgently needed.

The Christian response

As is often the case with God, Christ answered the truth question before it was asked. He declared, “I am the...truth” (John 14:6). On another occasion, Christ prayed to His Father, “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Furthermore, Scripture affirms that “the heavens declare the glory of God” (Psalm 19:1), and that “all His works are done in truth” (Psalm 33:4 NIV).

Here, then, is found the Christian response to Pilate’s question. The Word – whether written, illustrated, or incarnate – is Truth.

God, in essence, desires to continually reveal truth to humanity. Knowing would be unattainable, were it not for the self-initiated, self-revealing nature of God (1 Corinthians 2:12). Divine revelation is then the channel through which God communicates facts and principles to human beings. This revelation of truth is foundational and includes:

- God’s creation in each of its dimensions (Psalm 85:11; Romans 1:20; James 1:18),
- The Holy Scriptures (Psalm 119:105, 142, 151, 160), and
- Jesus Christ, “God with us” (Matthew 1:23; John 1:14, 17; 14:6).

These “words” of God provide an ascending order of revelation (2 Peter 1:19), in which later revelations do not displace the earlier avenues, but rather complement each manifestation with richer meaning. In the Christian worldview, for example, we recognize that the intrusion of sin has distorted our understanding of God’s truth revealed in His creation – both in nature and in human society. Consequently, the Scriptures clarify in detail the truth about the untruth.¹⁰

Ultimately, however, truth is a Person. Christ is the fullest revelation of truth – “the express image” of the divine (Hebrews 1:3; also 2 Corinthians 4:6). This revelation through Christ, anchored in Scripture (Luke 24:27; John 5:39) and expanded through a personal relationship with God (John 17:3), responds to the human condition in a way that surpasses any other presentation of truth.

Consequently, for the Christian, truth exists as a God-initiated revelation. It is authoritative, provided by One who has not only examined all the evidence, but also formed the evidence (John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-16). For this reason, the multitude, who had gathered to listen, observed that Jesus taught “as one having authority” (Matthew 7:29) – the inherent authority of the Word, as contrasted with the limited truth criteria of the world.

Implications of the Christian perspective

What does the Christian response to the truth search mean to the believer? What are the ramifications of this paradigm? There seem to be a number of implications:

1. For the Christian, truth is anchored in the supernatural. Truth begins with God (James 1:17), not with human beings. The Creator is ultimately the Source of all truth (John 1:17). Consequently, truth does not originate within nature, nor is it initiated by human beings. Men and women only discover truth.

2. Truth is eternal because it resides in God. Psalm 117:2 states that God's truth "endures forever" (see also Psalm 100:5). What does this mean? Because truth is eternal, it existed before the human mind, and hence the mind can neither create nor destroy truth. We can only choose to accept it or to reject it, to abide in the truth or to abandon truth and reside in error.¹¹ As Christians, we must remember that nothing can be done "against the truth, but for the truth" (2 Corinthians 13:8). Human beings simply cannot obliterate truth. The world had its best chance at Calvary, and failed notably. Our role, then, as Christians is invitational, rather than confrontational. We do not so much need to "defend truth" from annihilation, as to extend the invitation to accept God's eternal truth.

3. Because God is the ultimate origin of truth and God does not change (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17), truth is unchanging. God's truth is absolute and universal in scope – it is true for all time, place, and person (Psalm 100:5; Isaiah 43:9). With the pervasiveness of relativism in contemporary culture, many individuals have come to believe that truth itself is relative – a matter of mere opinion, of social convention. While circumstances do change and there is brokenness and fragmentation evident in many aspects of life, the Christian worldview is able to provide a framework that offers stability and security. As Christians, we can help postmoderns discover foundations for their lives, enduring ideals that can provide a basis for living. We can help them to understand that the solidity of truth contributes to a personal sense of identity, direction, and belonging.

4. All truth possesses unity because it comes from the same Source. Since God is one (Deuteronomy 6:4), truth is one, for God is truth (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 31:5). Truth, therefore, will always be in harmony with itself

wherever and whenever it is found. Anything that contradicts truth is error or reveals a problem with finite human understanding. There seem to be several inferences: (a) to know God is the key to seeing life as a meaningful whole; (b) while there is always the danger of starting with a false premise or of forcing the evidence, the greater the scope of evidence and the better it fits, the more adequate its justification as truth; (c) as Christians, we must avoid creating false dichotomies within God's truth. These could include the severance of mercy and justice, the separation of piety and action, the disconnect of theory and practice, or the partition of faith and learning.

5. Truth is infinite because God is infinite. Our circle of knowledge is surrounded by the vast universe of our ignorance. The endless extent of God's truth lies as yet virtually undiscovered. Just as the perimeter of a circle (our contact with the unknown) increases as the area of that circle enlarges, so the more we learn of God's truth, the more we realize how much there is yet to know – and the more humble we will be. It's when the circle is small, and our contact with the unknown is reduced, that we are tempted to think that we "know everything." How presumptuous then it would be for us to declare, at any time, that we have now arrived, that we now possess all the truth. Christians, then, do not have "all the truth," but ultimately all that they possess will be truth (1 Corinthians 13:12).

6. The Christian understanding of truth must be progressive. It is not enough to stand in the truth—we must *walk* in the path of truth (Psalm 25:5; 26:3; 43:3; 86:11; 3 John 4). This concept of "walking" implies new horizons. It is a call to learning and to growth. To change the metaphor, the term "rooted and grounded" (Ephesians 3:17) denotes that a plant is vibrant, receiving continual nourishment, growing in the truth (Ephesians 4:15; 2 Peter 3:18). While truth does

not change, our relationship to truth must develop. We must recognize that our understandings of truth are but "works in progress" – that new dimensions of truth should progressively open before us.

7. Because God is the Source of all truth, all truth is ultimately God's truth. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17; see also John 1:17). This implies that we must see every topic and every dimension of our lives as an extension of God's truth. It also suggests that we must beware of exclusivity in the claim of truth. While Christians have truth, they do not, in the Christian worldview, have a monopoly on truth. Rather, because God makes His sun shine on the evil and on the good (Matthew 5:45) and would have all come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4), non-believers also discover truth. What then is the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian? The non-Christian stumbles across tenets of truth in his or her journey through life, while the Christian recognizes the Source of that truth.

Considerations in the search for truth

The Christian perspective clarifies a number of issues particularly relevant to our search for truth. These include the role of research, the dilemma of paradoxes, and the matter of authenticity.

1. Engaging in research. Research is a focused and systematic search for truth. In our world, truth has become like a lost coin in the grass. Although covered with weeds, it is still a coin, and still of value. Our duty is to be the metal detectors of the world, to find coins of truth and lift them out from the rubbish of Satan's lies.

Research is, in fact, a divine directive (Proverbs 2:4-5; Ecclesiastes 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 2 Timothy 2:15).¹² It is true that we see but

dimly (1 Corinthians 13:12), but just because the glass may be imperfect doesn't mean that we should not seek to discover all the truth that it is possible for us to learn. Scripture, in fact, abounds with individuals of faith who exercised the spirit of inquiry (e.g., Job 29:16; Psalm 77:6; Acts 17:11; 1 Peter 1:10). For all, the intent is to identify truth – to “hold fast what is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Truth loses nothing by investigation. Rather, both reason and faith are strengthened by the scrutiny of research and refined in the crucible of analysis. At the same time, however, we must acknowledge that inquiry has its limitations (Job 11:7), and that even a careful application of the scientific method is not a guarantee of truth (Psalm 64:6). Consequently, although we endeavor to safeguard the truth-value of our conclusions, we recognize that we cannot arrive at certainty based on empirical data. We can never state, “Research has *proved*....” Rather, we must speak in terms of evidence – indications that bear “witness to the truth” (John 18:37; 3 John 1:12).

2. Dealing with paradoxes. At times truths can seem to be contradictory. Whereas Greek-based logic saw the opposite of a truth to be false, Judaic thought is able to view truth as the tension between contrasting ideas.¹³ There seems to be biblical precedent for this tolerance of opposites. Paradoxes in Scripture include Christ's humanity and divinity (Colossians 2:9; 1 Timothy 2:5), the relationship of faith and works (Ephesians 2:8; Philippians 2:12), as well as God's mercy and justice, human free will and God's sovereignty, and God's love and human suffering, among others.

While we cannot overlook apparent contradictions, we must recognize that our perception is often limited by perspective. To illustrate, we might use the analogy of a mountain range.¹⁴ Although each view of the mountains may be entirely correct, each is still only partially true in reference to the

whole. The fact that one perspective differs from another does not necessarily mean that either is false, only that each is incomplete. Only God is in a position to know truth in its entirety. This awareness calls for humility.

3. The need for authenticity. While the Christian worldview maintains that universal truth does indeed exist, it also recognizes the human constraint of partial knowledge and the potential for flawed interpretation. Consequently, no one can claim infallibility or a full understanding of any topic – not even a Christian.¹⁵

Accordingly, we, as Christians, must particularly model authenticity and humility. This includes recognizing the limits of our knowledge, being honest about our weaknesses, and expressing the tentativeness of our conclusions. It implies evidencing openness to correction and demonstrating a passion for continued growth. It suggests that as believers we must come together to build a dynamic, Word-based learning community as a key ingredient of the search for truth.

Conclusion

In sum, truth begins with God, and not with humans. It is revealed, and not constructed. It is discovered, and not determined by a majority vote. It is authoritative, and not merely a matter of personal preference. It is feelings that must conform to truth, rather than truth to feelings. Ideas are not true solely because they are practical; rather, they will ultimately be of value because they are true. In the final analysis, the arbiter of truth is the steadfast Word of the infinite/personal God.

As Christians, we must interact directly with the repositories of truth, revealed through Scripture, through the creation in all of its dimensions, and in the person of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, we must communicate confidence in the trustworthiness of the divine revelation of truth – a “more sure word... which [we] do well to heed” (2 Peter 1:19).

Finally, we must truly understand the relationship of truth and freedom. We do not so much need freedom in order to discover truth, as we must reside in truth in order to experience freedom. Truth, in fact, offers the only freedom.¹⁶ “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

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5. R. Rorty, “Postmodernist bourgeois liberalism” in R. Hollinger (ed.), *Hermeneutics and Praxis* (South Bend, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985).
6. H. Blamires, *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1963), p. 40.
7. Imagine that the only black animals you have ever seen are dogs. You might assume that all black animals are dogs (major premise). One day you spot a black animal – “Here's a black animal” (minor premise). Logical conclusion? “This is a dog.” Actually, it's a bear!
8. A corollary to this principle recognizes that there are statements that seem to inherently defy human logic: (a) “Can God do anything? Could He make a rock that He couldn't pick up?” (b) “All generalizations are false.” If it is true, then it is false; and how can something be true and false at the same time? (c) “When I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10). (d) “Having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (2 Corinthians 6:10). (e) “Whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it” (Mark 8:35).
9. Blamires, p. 4.
10. “There are wonderful truths in nature. The

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Worship as adoration

A perspective from Ellen G. White

by Daniel Plenc

Of all things, the one experience that must launch us into unreserved adoration is the joy of salvation from sin.

Throughout her ministry, Ellen White's approach to worship emphasized the role of practical religion in life. Although her focus did not fail to stress issues such as reverence, prayer, preaching, music, and singing, her writings reveal a fundamental grounding of worship in biblical theology – on subjects such as God's central role, the human response to God, salvation as a real and joyful experience, church as a worshipping community, and the future as the Christian's ultimate hope.

Adoration: God as all in all

Ellen White affirms that God deserves to be adored for the qualities of His character and for His creative and redemptory work. Worship must begin with a clear and close relationship to God. "When we are able to comprehend the character of God, as did Moses, we, too, shall make haste to bow in adoration and praise."¹

Among other divine attributes Ellen White mentions as reasons for worship and reverence are justice, perfection, greatness, wisdom, presence, kindness, power, compassion, holiness, and love. Great acts of God such as creation, sustenance, revelation, and redemption are also powerful reasons. She writes: "The duty to worship God is based upon the fact that he is the Creator and that to him all other beings owe their existence."²

Ellen White offers a delicate balance between God's transcendence and immanence, and so encourages reverence and order as well as communion

and happiness. She recognizes that worship is related to the three divine persons, and affirms that true worship is "the fruit of the working of the Holy Spirit."³

Adoration: Human response to God

Ellen White also understood adoration as the response of humans to God. This response recognizes first and foremost God as worthy of all worship from His created order. Without Him, we are not. All that we are and all that we do must come under the overarching imperative of who God is and what He expects of us. Before Him, we must stand in reverence, respect, humility, thankfulness, obedience, and joy. Every creative and emotional response that defines what humans are becomes subject to Him. Hence she warns: "Christ's followers today should guard against the tendency to lose the spirit of reverence and godly fear."⁴

Even though we are small and sinful before the awful presence of God, we are called upon to worship Him as children – boldly and "with joyfulness."⁵ We should consider it "a pleasure to worship the Lord and to take part in His work."⁶

Joy and boldness are part of the integrated nature of worship. Ellen White defines this integration as a factor that demands that we worship God with all we are – our bodies, our thoughts, our emotions, our possessions. Adoration must become a lifestyle: "God desired that the whole life of His people should be a life of praise."⁷

Adoration: A joyful experience in salvation

Of all things, the one experience that must launch us into unreserved adoration is the joy of salvation from sin. Ellen White says: "Every heart that is enlightened by the grace of God is constrained to bow with inexpressible

gratitude and adoration before the Redeemer for His infinite sacrifice."⁸ In addition to the cross, the intercessory work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary invokes gratitude and adoration to God. Christ's "perfect righteousness, which through faith is imputed to His people...can alone make the worship of sinful beings acceptable to God."⁹

Since worship is a living experience of the redeemed, Ellen White underscored true worship as a service of love, gratitude, and obedience. "Without obedience to His commandments no worship can be pleasing to God."¹⁰ Hence, Sabbath takes on its significance as a day of remembrance and worship.

Adoration: The church coming together in worship

Ellen White believed that adoration and worship are significant in the gathering of the community of faith. She describes the moments of worship as a "sacred and precious season."¹¹ Therefore, she continually stressed reverence and order in worship, and avoiding any kind of confusion. She wrote: "There should be rules in regard to the time, the place, and the manner of worshipping. Nothing that is sacred, nothing that pertains to the worship of God, should be treated with carelessness or indifference."¹² Her vision of worship included dignity and serenity, avoiding the extremes of formalism and fanaticism. She appreciated reverence and warned against noise, screams, fanatic expressions, and excitement. "God's work is ever characterized by calmness and dignity,"¹³ and so should our worship of Him.

As it is the moment when the saints come to worship their Creator, Ellen White was always conscious of the true spirit of worship. "The evil of formal worship cannot be too strongly depicted," she wrote, "but no words can properly set forth the deep blessed-

ness of genuine worship.”¹⁴ Worship meetings, therefore, should be spiritual, attractive, and fraternal. “Our meetings should be made intensely interesting. They should be pervaded with the very atmosphere of heaven.”¹⁵ Participation is important. “The preaching at our Sabbath meetings should generally be short. Opportunity should be given for those who love God to express their gratitude and adoration.”¹⁶

Adoration: Celebrating the future as the Christian’s hope

Ellen White assigned to adoration an outstanding place in the final events. She viewed a time of testing, but also a better time of praise and adoration for the church. She also affirmed that the adoration experience will be projected toward eternity. She taught that worship of the Creator was at the root of the cosmic conflict between good and evil that started in heaven. It was Lucifer’s opposition to the Son being worthy of all worship just as the Father is that started the conflict in heaven, and it is this conflict that is at the root of sin on earth. Ellen White’s description of the final stages of the Great Controversy is one that centers on who will be the ultimate recipient of our worship: Christ or Satan? Between eternal life and eternal destruction stands the answer to that ultimate question.

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3. *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1940), p. 189.
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10. *The Great Controversy*, p. 437.
11. *Testimonies for the Church*, Mountain View: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1948) 6:358.
12. *Ibid.*, 5: 492.
13. *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1958), 2:42.
14. *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1915), p. 357.
15. *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:609.
16. *Ibid.*, 6:361.

The truth search

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- earth, the sea, and the sky are full of truth.... But fallen man will not understand. Sin has obscured his vision, and he cannot of himself interpret nature without placing it above God. Correct lessons cannot impress the minds of those who reject the word of God” – E. G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, Publ. Assn., 1941), p. 107.
11. This distinction is vital, for John 8:44 indicates that Lucifer did not abide in the truth, and therefore there is now “no truth in him.”
 12. “Instead of confining their study to that which men have said or written, let students be directed to the sources of truth, to the vast fields opened for research in nature and revelation.” – E. G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1903), p. 17.
 13. J. Paulien, “The postmodern acts of God.” Presidential Address to the Adventist Society for Religious Study, 2004. Retrieved from http://www.secularpostmodern.org/res_art9.php4 on November 25, 2007.
 14. R. A. Clark & S. D. Gaede, “Knowing together: Reflections on a holistic sociology of knowledge” in H. Heie & D. L. Wolfe (eds.) *The Reality of Christian Learning* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987).
 15. Even when we speak of the infallible truth of Scripture, we cannot claim infallibility for any of our own understandings or interpretations of Scripture.
 16. As Rex Edwards (“Truth: The neglected virtue,” *Adventist Review*, October 11, 2007, pp.14-16) points out: Only when we know the truth about an airplane are we free to pilot it. Only when we know the truth of the science of medicine are we free to practice it. Only the person who knows the truth of engineering is free to build a bridge

that will stand.

Design in nature

Continued from page 10

- Naturam rerum: tanta stat praedita culpa*
Titus Lucretius Carus. circa 55 B.C.
De Rerum Natura. Book 5 lines 198-99
Translated by W. H. D. Rouse, revised by Martin F. Smith in *Lucretius: On the Nature of Things*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992). See also Book 2, lines 180-1.
6. Gould, p. 37.
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 9. See Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion and An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*.
 10. Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section XI. Of a particular providence and of a future state, p. 115.
 11. See Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*. Introduction.
 12. W. Paley, *Natural Theology; or, Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity*, 12th Edition (London: J. Faulder, 1809), p. 3.
 13. See *Ibid.*, chapter III, Application of the argument.
 14. Charles R. Darwin, *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1958), p. 59.
 15. See J. S. Huxley, *Evolution in Action* (Middlesex, UK: Penguin, 1953, 1963), p. 16.
 16. C. G. Hunter, *Darwin’s God: Evolution and the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2002), p. 165.
 17. T. H. Huxley, *Collected Essays*, Vol. II, 1893. Preface.
 18. Darwin, “On the Imperfection of the Geological Record,” chapter X in *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (New York: Penguin Books, 1958), p. 287-312.
 19. P. E. Johnson, *Darwin on Trial*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1991).
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The tenderness of His love

by Roy Adams

Jesus' love transcends our rebellion and our estrangement and is stable, unchangeable, and unconditional. It is the most tender love that human hearts can know.

I was sitting in my study at home, looking out the window at a cardinal, a splash of bright red against the brown drab of tree branches just recovering from the cold of winter. It was a morning that, for some reason, anxious thoughts had been going through my mind. And there sat the cardinal reminding me that the same God who cares for it and had clothed it so gorgeously also has concern for me.

The following morning the cardinal returned. But before noticing him, I'd spotted another feathered creature – smaller and almost completely camouflaged among the auburn branches. And the thought of the previous morning came back to me – about the unimaginable love of God. I thought about how small that cardinal appeared from my window, just 20 yards away, and how infinitesimally tiny (in fact, how totally invisible) it would be if I were flying in a jet at 35,000 feet. Then I imagined how exceedingly more difficult it would be to see the other bird – the brown one. Yet God sees them both across the limitless light-years of space. *And He cares about them!*

In Jesus we find someone who loves and cares like that. Speaking to the common people gathered on a hillside in Galilee, He spoke words that His life among them would soon put into practice: "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" (Matthew 6:26).¹

The Gospels are chock-full of illus-

trations of the tender love of Jesus. In what follows I have space for just a few.

Love for a cornered woman

The story appears in John 8:1-11. The woman had been caught in adultery – in the very act, said the men who'd dragged her into Jesus' presence. And they knew their Moses well. The great prophet of Sinai had said that such offenders should be stoned in public. "What's *your* verdict?" they demanded.

Jesus might have excused Himself. After all, He was not part of the legal establishment and was not vested with judicial powers recognized in any Judean court of law. So why would they come to Him? It would have been entirely proper for Him to pass.

But He wouldn't. For cowering before Him was a distraught woman, nightmares of a horrible death filling every corner of her tortured mind. Her heart pounding, her pulse racing, the tears of shame flowing down her haggard face, she expects the stones to start striking her fragile body any minute. Then, horror of horrors, she hears from Jesus' lips what would surely be her death sentence: "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her" (verse 7, RSV). Regarding all her accusers as flawless adherents of the law – and faultless – she fully expects Jesus' words to seal her doom and send a barrage of rocks hurtling down upon her all at once.

She braces herself, her face in her hands (as I picture it), her anxiety level at maximum. Moments pass. Nothing – only silence. Daring at last to look up from her crouch, she finds herself alone with Jesus. "Where are those accusers of yours?" Jesus asks her gently. "Has no one condemned you?" (verse 10, NKJV). "No one, sir," she replies. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declares. "Go now and leave your life of sin" (verse 11).

The woman does not skip as she departs – perhaps considering that

reaction inappropriate for the situation. Nor does she shout – that would have been unseemly for the culture. Instead she quietly walks away, her heart exploding with joy, the tears flowing – only now they're tears of joy. Her every step singing with new hope, she can live again, because she'd come face to face with love personified – the most tender love she never knew existed.

Love for a bragging turncoat

Jesus had a tender love for all His disciples (John 13:1). Amid all the tenseness and confusion of the night of His betrayal in Gethsemane, He was still protective of them. "If you are looking for me," He said to those ready to arrest Him, "then let these men go" (John 18:8).

The way He dealt with Peter spoke volumes, and portrayed His love for all the others. The bragging disciple had pledged his unwavering support for Jesus that very evening of the arrest. Even if all others abandon you, he'd said to Jesus, I never will! (see Matthew 26:31-33.) But as the hours of the night wore on, he would shamefully cower under the accusing eyes of ordinary bystanders and deny in the strongest language that he'd ever set eyes upon a man named Jesus. When for the third time they tried to nail him, he'd call down curses upon himself, swearing: "I don't know the man!" (verse 74).

At that precise moment a rooster crowed and "the Lord turned and looked straight at Peter" (Luke 22:61). "Then, Peter remembered.... And he went outside and wept bitterly" (verses 61, 62).

What message did Jesus' expression send to His turncoat disciple? Here's this insight from a classic on the life of Jesus: "While the degrading oaths were fresh upon Peter's lips, and the shrill crowing of the cock was still ringing in his ears, the Saviour turned from the frowning judges, and looked full upon His poor disciple. At the same time

Peter's eyes were drawn to his Master. In that gentle countenance he read deep pity and sorrow, but there was no anger there."²

Extraordinary! Jesus had given Peter every advantage, every privilege – making him part of the inner circle, so to speak. The disciple should have known better, should have done better. And Jesus had every right to be profoundly disappointed – and, indeed, He was. But as their eyes met that night in the judgment place, the disciple saw no anger in Jesus' face, no sign of retaliation or revenge.

"The sight of that pale, suffering face, those quivering lips, that look of compassion and forgiveness, pierced [Peter's] heart like an arrow. Conscience was aroused....A tide of memories rushed over him. The Saviour's tender mercy, His kindness and long-suffering, His gentleness and patience toward His erring disciples – all was remembered....He reflected with horror upon his own ingratitude, his falsehood, his perjury. Once more he looked at his Master, and saw a sacrilegious hand raised to smite Him in the face. Unable longer to endure the scene, he rushed, heartbroken, from the hall....At last he found himself in Gethsemane....On the very spot where Jesus had poured out His soul in agony to His Father, Peter fell upon his face, and wished that he might die."³

It's not the fire and brimstone that's most powerful in leading people to repentance, nor the scolding, the shaming, and the browbeating. Rather it's love, sheer love, the tender love of Christ. That's what Peter saw that night in the eyes of Jesus. That's what he felt in that critical moment. That's what broke his heart. And that's what'll break ours as well. It can happen at any time – during a religious meeting, in a class on physics, while you drive to work, or as you read the Bible. And it can occur when sitting in your study looking out the window at cardinals. His tender love knows no barriers and no bounds. It speaks to us

wherever we might be, and it reaches us wherever we go.

Love for a lonely woman of another race

We can see the tenderness of Jesus' love in the way He handled the people whose lives He touched along the way, regardless of race or ethnic origin. Consider the woman of Samaria, for example (John 4:4-26). Ignoring societal strictures, He first of all took time to recognize her for what she was – a human being created in the image of God. He gave her the time of day – stunning her – and even asked a favor. His sheer love for her had broken the ice. All He could see before Him was a valued woman in desperate need of the grace that He'd come to bring. "If you knew the gift of God," He said to her, His heart yearning for her spiritual welfare, "and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water" (John 4:10).

As their conversation continued, Jesus would deftly handle the emotional issue of the difference in worship between Jews and Samaritans, and broach in the tenderest manner possible the delicate situation of her social life.

The woman was not a prostitute, not according to John's account. She'd lived with five men, but they were "husbands," Jesus said (verses 17, 18). The story of that portion of her life – how and why these husbands came and went – we do not know. Nor do we know why she'd now chosen to live in a common-law relationship. But it was clear to Jesus that it had all taken its toll, making her a pariah in the community, perhaps evidenced (as some have pointed out) by the lonely time of day she chose to fetch her water.

Totally immersed in His conversation with the needy woman, Jesus lost all sense of time and of the gripping hunger that He'd previously been feeling. True, it showed His intensity for

His mission; it also displayed a love both personal and tender. Touched by His utter graciousness, the woman found herself craving the water He had to give, yearning for the spiritual worship He described, and asking about Messiah. When the Messiah comes, she said to Him – I believe with a glint of expectation in her eyes that she'd indeed chanced upon the long-hoped-for Person – He will tell us everything.

That was too much for Jesus! Breaking His accustomed reticence on the subject of His identity, He told her plainly: "I who speak to you am he" (verse 26).

As the woman, abandoning her waterpots in her excitement upon receiving this astonishing revelation, rushed back into town, her words to her townspeople spoke volumes about the tender manner in which Jesus had dealt with her that day. I find it significant that of all the things He had talked to her about, the part she mentioned to them turned out to be the very things of which she'd been most ashamed: "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" (verse 29).

Who else but Jesus could bring my sordid past to my attention in such a way that I'm thereby drawn to Him in love and adoration? Who else can make the dark events of yesterday become for me a window of hope for tomorrow? And who else can love me with such tender compassion! In Jesus we have a picture of indiscriminate, unconditional, scandalous love – love for every human being that He met.

Love for a rebellious nation

As the triumphal procession approached Jerusalem that Sunday of Passion Week, Jesus halted on the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem to utter a lament on Israel's coming calamity: "If you...had only known on this day what would bring you peace....The days will come...when your enemies will...hem you in on every side. They will dash you

to the ground, you and the children within your walls” (Luke 19:42-44).

The lament in Luke connects thematically to that in Matthew 23:33-36, and exposes the tenderness, the heartbreak, that lay beneath the pronouncement of impending judgment: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . , how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing” (Matthew 23:37).

The story of David and Absalom (2 Samuel 13-15) comes as close as any to a human model of God’s tender love for us in our rebellion. The narrative documents the strained relationship between the young man and his royal father, David (a tension provoked by Absalom’s murder of his half brother Amnon for sexually violating Absalom’s sister, Tamar). The account takes us through Absalom’s self-imposed exile; his return following an ingenious scheme devised by the head of David’s army; his temporary reconciliation with his father; and, finally, his attempted coup. The story describes how David, accompanied by the rest of the royal household, hastily abandons the palace and the capital in the wake of his son’s rebellion. It crushed and devastated the king to know that the one now hunting him down was not his jealous predecessor, but his own son.

As the fighting commenced, however, David charged his generals to protect Absalom’s life and keep him safe from harm: “Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake” (2 Samuel 18:5). Nevertheless, Absalom is killed. And given the trauma the young prince had brought upon the nation and his father, what astonishes us is David’s reaction upon learning of his death. “The king was shaken,” the text says. “He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: ‘O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!’” (2 Samuel 18:33).

It’s a cry that finds an echo in Jesus’ agonizing lament over Jerusalem that historic day: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem” No wonder the people called Jesus “Son of David.” We hear it from the lips of the blind beggar, Bartimaeus, outside Jericho (Mark 10:47), and we hear it from the Canaanite woman who came to Him (Matthew 15:22). It’s “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Never “Jesus, Son of Adam,” or “Jesus, Son of Abraham,” or “Jesus, Son of Elijah.” No, almost invariably it was “Jesus, Son of David” (see Matthew 9:27; 20:30; Luke 18:38), *and always in the context of mercy and compassion.*

Whatever else this pattern says, I believe it speaks of One whose love and tender mercy reminded people of David’s attitude of tenderness and mercy to an undeserving son. We might speculate as to what would have happened had the royal forces captured Absalom alive and how his father would have treated him. Unfortunately, we shall never know for sure. But we can reasonably infer, based on all the other details of the story, that that father’s heart would not have loved him any less.

In that respect he resembles Jesus, who, while knowing how evil we are, yet chooses to love us and accept us. Which brings to mind a heartrending story that appeared in one of my local papers in the fall of 2006.

Here’s how it began: “A talkative 9-year-old boy came to Helen Briggs on Valentine’s Day 2000. She was a foster mother with years of tough love and scores of troubled kids behind her. But she grew to love this boy. Within the year, she’d talked her husband into adopting him. “Now, six years later, Briggs and her husband, James . . . are taking the highly unusual step of trying to unadopt him.”

The trouble commenced for them in 2003, when the boy, then 12, “sexually molested a 6-year-old boy and a 2-year-old girl still in diapers.” As the issue went to court, the adoptive par-

ents discovered other troubling details that led to their petition to relinquish custody. Among other things, abuse by his alcohol- and drug-addicted biological parents had injured the boy’s brain stem and affected his ability to gauge the passage of time. Seven times he had undergone hospitalization in psychiatric institutions and was possibly psychotically bipolar. In addition, he’d threatened to kill himself and had begun hearing voices.

In short, the adoptive parents discovered they had a damaged product on their hands. “You don’t want to throw somebody away,” his adoptive mother said. “But sometimes you have to.”⁴

That Virginia couple didn’t know what they were getting into, and all reasonable people would readily understand their predicament. But when He chose us, God fully knew how wretched we were, yet did it anyway. And to come into contact with the tender love of Jesus is to know that we’ll never find ourselves unadopted.

Love that goes deep and personal

Charles Templeton, once an associate of Billy Graham, had left the church, becoming a confirmed atheist and a bitter critic of religion. In his book *The Case for Faith*, evangelical writer Lee Strobel tells about his meeting with Templeton in the man’s Toronto apartment.

As their conversation proceeded, Strobel asked Templeton what he thought of Jesus. And here’s part of what followed, as Strobel tells it.

“Templeton’s body language softened. It was as if he suddenly felt relaxed and comfortable in talking about an old and dear friend . . . ‘He was,’ Templeton began, ‘the greatest human being who has ever lived.’ . . .

“You sound like you really care about him.”

“Well, yes, he’s the most important thing in my life . . . ‘I . . . I . . . I,’ he

Continued on page 35

PROFILE



A professional flautist. A trained theologian. A multilingualist with proficiency in 10 languages. Dr. Ganoune Diop is all this, plus a person with a passion for missions. Raised in a multicultural, predominantly Muslim setting in Senegal, Dr. Diop became a Seventh-day Adventist 30 years ago when he was studying flute at the Conservatory of Music of La Rochelle in France, and he came under the influence of an Adventist teacher. His educational achievement includes a Master's degree in philology, and a doctorate in Old Testament studies.

Currently, Dr. Diop is serving as the director and coordinator of five inter-faith study centers around the world. These centers are established by the world church to promote better understanding of, and fresh approaches to, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, secularism, and postmodernism. The centers are located respectively in India, Thailand, Cyprus, Israel and England (see box).

As a director of these interfaith study centers, Dr. Diop serves as a liaison between the centers and the church's administration at the world headquarters, including the 13 world

Ganoune Diop

Dialogue with an Adventist leader in inter-faith approaches

Interview by Ansel Oliver

divisions, and the Biblical Research Institute.

■ *How did you become an Adventist?*

While studying flute at the conservatory of music in France, I came in contact with one of my teachers, who happened to be an Adventist. In our conversations, I often talked to him about my struggle for inner freedom, even though I did not know what it all meant. Once he told me rather boldly that I would really be free the day I came to know Jesus. To be that bold and direct may not work under all circumstances, but it worked for me. I thought I knew Jesus. I used to hear about Jesus in my childhood. But the way he talked about Jesus showed that there was something more than just an intellectual grasp of who Jesus was.

■ *What were some of the challenges you faced as an Adventist in a secular educational institution?*

Understanding people's mindset, and worldview, especially in French society. I tried to understand why people weren't interested in religion. The more I thought about it, the more it became clear that it's because of the abuses of the past in the name of religion. Power was used not to protect people but for other purposes. Think about what brought the French Revolution in the first place. There are generations of people who are still disillusioned and disenchanted because of that. Ideologies of the past have failed. It has led to a postmodern type of mentality.

■ *How can Adventists in public uni-*

versities participate in the church's Global Mission initiatives?

By being witnesses where they are. Global Mission is really about reaching the unreached. By knowing God and being in a relationship with Him. Christ's method cannot be outdated – mingling with people, you know, until a trusting relationship is built, and then we can share Christ.

■ *Why does the church need study centers? Paul and Silas didn't have them.*

Paul and Silas didn't need them because they had a very localized ministry and they were conversant with the people with whom they were preaching. Paul knew about Greek philosophers. He could cite their poets and converse in the local idioms. Today, we have a worldwide movement, the Adventist Church, so the centers are to equip the church in developing awareness and competence among church members in reaching people of various world religions.

■ *What are the centers doing?*

They are creating methods and models and equipping the church to know how to better understand and approach other people groups. Now, some centers are more active than others. Some are producing results that can be quantified. Others, like the secular and postmodern center in England, have just started, and it takes more time because they work in more challenging areas. The center in Thailand is doing a fantastic job. They are putting out a CD of resources. The Global Center for Adventist Muslim Relations has one already. The World Jewish Friendship Center is creating

communities in several countries. These centers are also helping various church departments put out materials. Obviously, it's not just about multiplying activities and producing materials. It's also about developing a proper theological vision and applying missiological perspectives that are loyal to the church.

■ *We contacted the secular and post-modern center in England. They said they are still in the preliminary stages of research. How long have these centers been open?*

The study center initiative started in the 1990s, so some of them have been around for about 10 years. The Centre for Secular and Postmodern Studies is the newest. It started a few years ago and its current format is just over a year old.

■ *The Center for Hinduism told us they are having success by promoting an Indian style of worship. What is that?*

Worshipping in Indian style does not mean worshipping in Hindu temples. What it means is to adapt worship forms, such as singing and preaching, to local traditional culture that in no way contradicts Christian imperatives. Not so long ago, I was in India and observed worshippers seated on the floor and singing lyrics with traditional Indian melodies. Not the Western-style hymns. They are using local musical instruments. The centers can do much more; many of them are just at the infant stage of developing a contextualized means of proclamation and producing relevant materials. They are on a learning curve right now. Some of them are really doing well. My challenge is to help them really deliver what they were set up for.

■ *What have been some of the shortcomings?*

I think the church needs the collaboration of missiologists, practitioners, and theologians to really bring about a radical understanding of world reli-

gions and long-lasting ministries. It's not enough to just have a "missionary heart." We also need to engage both theologians and missiologists to benefit the ministries in various unentered areas.

■ *I imagine, as in some church administrative structures, that personnel is also limited.*

Ideally, we would want to have the centers fully devoted to their global mission work. Even though these centers are located in various divisions, they are General Conference [world church administration] entities, so they are called to serve the world church. As they see the global need, the centers will be prompted to produce materials. They do have results now. To me, the results can be maximized, and we can be doing far more than we are currently doing.

■ *What's next?*

As we look to the future, we need to think in terms of expanding the centers and having a body of cross-disciplinary competence. Also, identify new venues. I just got back from Azerbaijan, and it would be great to equip those people to minister to nearby countries. That's something I'm exploring – different venues for the unreached people groups. Many of those countries are Islamic but with a communist, secular twist. It's a different kind of Islam than you find in the Middle East or Africa or Indonesia.

■ *There are parts of the world where proselytism is illegal. To what degree can we promote our beliefs?*

Well, this is where contextualized ministry becomes effective – indigenous people are empowered to find ways to live their newfound faith in Christ in spite of the adverse circumstances in which they live. So the centers explore ways, in that sense, and develop models.

■ *How can we encourage generos-*

ity among missionaries and promote embracing people rather than dueling with people to whom they are sent? Do some feel they are in a battle of who is right?

We cannot succeed by saying, "We have the truth, and you better listen to us." A missionary needs to be confident of his or her being sent to proclaim God's truth. There is no arrogance in that. Actually, every religion claims its beliefs are absolute. Well, except Hinduism and syncretistic religions. However, when you go out there you do so, not to patronize them or demean them, but rather to accompany them in their spiritual journey toward a radical transformation.

■ *Is there anything else you wish to share with us, the readers, or the study center directors?*

The mission is God's mission. We are participating in what God is doing. These centers not only equip but also develop mission awareness in people

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Study centers

Buddhism Religious Study Center
Muak Lek, Saraburi, Thailand
www.bridgesforministry.org
griswold@loxinfo.co.th

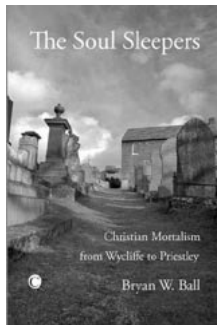
Centre for Secular and Postmodern
Studies
St. Albans, England
www.reframe.info
miroslav@reframe.info

Center for the Study of Hinduism
Hosur, Tamil Nadu, India
mhanroy@sud-adventist.org

Global Center for Adventist-Muslim
Relations
Cyprus
jwhitehouse@gcamr.org

World Jewish Friendship Center
Jerusalem, Israel
www.jewishadventist.org
rielofer@netvision.net.il

BOOKS



The Soul Sleepers

by Bryan W. Ball (Cambridge, England: James Clarke & Co., 2008; 235 pages; paperback).

Reviewed by Gerhard Pfandl

The author is a well-known church educator, scholar, and administrator. In addition to years of service as pastor and teacher, he has served as head of the Religious Studies Department of Newbold College, England, principal of Avondale College, Australia, and president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific Division.

The Soul Sleepers is the latest of Dr. Bryan Ball's meticulously-researched books. Previous work by this church historian, who has a particular interest in English Puritan theology, include *The English Connection: The Puritan Roots of Seventh-day Adventist Belief*; *Seventh-day Men: Sabbatarians and Sabbatarianism in England and Wales, 1600-1800*; and *A Great Expectation: Eschatological Thought in English Protestantism to 1660*.

The voluminous research and scholarly thoroughness that has gone into the making of *The Soul Sleepers* is evident from the nearly 200 primary works from the 16th to the 18th centuries listed in the bibliography. The author's introductory chapter, which is a bibliographic survey, points out some of the lacunae and misinformation found in previous works dealing with the topic. L. E. Froom's comprehensive two-volume *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers*, for example, omits important names from the 17th century English scene, but includes several names for whom the conditionalist position is, at best, minimal or even refutable (p. 14).

To follow the author as he walks the reader through 300 years of English religious history, readers need to familiarize themselves with the word *mortalist* and two terms associated with it. *Mortalist* describes all those who do not believe in the immortality of the soul. And within the mortalist camp, Dr. Ball distinguishes between "psychopannychists," who believe in a separate immaterial soul which, after a person dies, sleeps until the resurrection, and "thnetopsychists," who understand the word *soul* simply as another word for "person," the reason being that when God breathed the breath of life into Adam the latter "became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). Hence, when a person dies, the soul also dies.

The book has seven chapters and three appendices. The

first chapter has a brief review of the doctrine of immortality in Catholic theology, followed by a discussion of mortalists on the continent during the time of the Reformation, such as Luther, Carlstadt, and some of the Anabaptists. The final section in this chapter deals with John Calvin's opposition to mortalist thought. It is a little-known fact that the physician and anti-Trinitarian writer Michael Servetus (1511-1553), who was burned at the stake in Geneva, was also a psychopannychist. Calvin saw mortalism in any form as heresy and called mortalists "soul-killers" (p. 39).

Chapters two to six trace the history of mortalism in England from its origin in the 14th century, beginning with John Wycliffe (1329-1384) to Joseph Priestley (1733-1804) at the end of the 18th century. Priestley was a nonconformist minister in Leeds who became famous at the end of the 18th century for his work on the chemistry of gases. He is remembered more for his scientific endeavors than for his theology. Nevertheless, his thnetopsychism was influential in the continuing development of mortalism in England.

The final chapter, "The World to Come – Realised Immortality," reviews the mortalists' position on the final reward of the faithful. "The thought that millions of disembodied spirits inhabiting a nebulous place called heaven either for eternity or during an indeterminate intermediate period was not in the least compatible with mortalist eschatology" (p. 176). The kingdom of God, they believed, was a restored new earth, where Christ and the saints will live and reign eternally (p. 180).

Many readers may be surprised to learn that men like William Tyndale (1494-1536), Reformer and Bible translator; Hugh Latimer (1485-1555), Reformer and martyr; the poet John Milton (1608-1529); and the philosophers Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) and John Locke (1632-1704) were all convinced mortalists. The last three were the major mortalist spokesmen of the 17th century, who interpreted *soul* as referring to a living person, and believed when that person died the soul also died (pp. 117, 118).

Mortalists consistently decried the immortality-of-the-soul teaching as unbiblical and as a "foundation for other false doctrinal assertions emanating from Rome, namely hell and purgatory" (p. 100). Their affirmations of psychopannychism or thnetopsychism, therefore, are frequently found in tandem with outspoken attacks on the medieval doctrine of purgatory. Furthermore, the idea of putting souls in heaven, hell, or purgatory destroyed for mortalists the argument wherewith Christ and Paul proved the resurrection. "If souls are already in heaven," Tyndale asked, "then what cause is there of the resurrection?" (p. 49). This was echoed by Francis Blackburne in the 18th century, who pointed out that the idea of the soul's immortality undermined all the essentials of the Christian faith (p. 162).

This book is a comprehensive and scholarly survey of mortalist thought in England during the Reformation and

Post-Reformation periods. Copious footnotes and a bibliography with more than 330 primary and secondary works provide not only support for what the author says, but are at the same time a gold mine of information for further research.

The historical evidence presented in this book challenges the traditional doctrine of the soul's innate immortality as taught in most Christian churches. In contrast to other Adventist books on the topic, this book distinguishes between "soul sleepers" (psychopannychists) and those who believe in the death of the soul (thnetopsychists). The book will be of interest to church historians and theologians as well as to lay members who are interested in the question of the nature of humankind. In the context of the present controversy on the issue of natural immortality within Protestantism, this book deserves to be widely read.

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El culto que agrada a Dios: criterios revelados acerca de la adoración

by Daniel Oscar Plenc, (Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos, Argentina: River Plate Adventist University, 2007; 159 pages; paperback).

Reviewed by Enrique Becerra

What is genuine religion and spirituality? How is adoration to be understood, and praise to be exercised? Currently, no other questions divide the church as deeply as those concerning the way we worship. To understand the issue, Daniel Plenc calls on us to forget personal views and opinions, and ask the question: What says the Word? Plenc takes us on a journey through various Bible texts that speak about the issue. His research aims to reflect on community worship within the context of biblical information and the faith of the church. After inviting readers to rethink worship and adoration, Plenc attempts to define adoration from a biblical perspective. This is followed by a short synopsis of various adoration practices – Catholic, Protestant, Charismatic, and Adventist. This comparative study provides a general backdrop for understanding issues that surround various practices of praise and adoration. What follows is "what has been revealed about adoration," which the author allows to

stand on its own in evaluating the biblical nature of various practices of adoration. The result is a scriptural exposition on topics such as God and adoration, humans and adoration, adoration and salvation, church and adoration, and eschatology and adoration.

Each chapter is coherent and linked with others, providing a magisterial clarity and unity to the topic announced in the title of the book. The book is well researched and documented, so much so that readers will find both information and inspiration in knowing what the Bible expects of us when we come to praise God.

In addition, Plenc provides scholarly research and solid content on what various scholars and authors through history have contributed to the topic. His analysis and systematization of the consulted bibliography is invaluable. All in all, this is a book that will help us understand what adoration is all about and how it should be practiced in our churches.

Enrique Becerra (Ph.D., Université de Strasbourg, France) was an associate director in the department of Education of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Now he is retired and writes from Beltsville, Maryland, U.S.A. E-mail: ebecerra36@gmail.com.



A Strange Place for Grace: Discovering a Loving God in the Old Testament

by Jon L. Dybdahl (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 2006. 144 pages, paperback).

Reviewed by Bradley A. Jamison

Jon L. Dybdahl

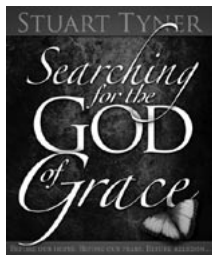
We all have a natural instinct: to live in our insular worlds surrounded by those like us in beliefs, world views, and lifestyle. To differentiate our uniqueness, we measure our differences by how we eat, dress, act, and talk. In time, we try to forget that we are all anxious and hurting, in desperate need of a God who continually offers a better way – a way out of the mess of this world and what we've made of our lives through our decisions and actions. And God comes into our lives with what we need when we need it, not because we deserve it, but because that's the way He is. This is the premise of Jon Dybdahl's book *A Strange Place for Grace*.

Dybdahl until recently served as the president of Walla Walla College in Washington state, where he enjoyed interacting with students and helping make college a life-chang-

ing experience. With this and his experience as pastor, missionary, seminary professor, and author of several books, he approaches a difficult task with theological understanding and faith sensitivity. Dybdahl makes clear that grace is not something new that God revealed in the last decade, century, or even since He walked among us 2,000 thousand years ago. Grace is how God is. God has been full of grace since the outset, and this is revealed and woven throughout the stories, symbols, and instruction of the Old Testament. As he does this, Dybdahl certainly acknowledges the seeming contradictions, and perhaps named his work accordingly.

The author argues that those accounts which at first might not seem to contain much grace need to be looked at again from new perspectives of time, culture, and context. He tackles the issues that many Christians struggle with, harmonizing the God of the Old Testament with that of the New Testament. However, one wonders if, in his premise, he carries the concept too far – in that grace can be applied to everything.

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Searching for the God of Grace
by Stuart Tyner (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 2006, 303 pages).

Reviewed by Paul Pichot

The title provides a clue to the author's objective. He wants us to search not so much *for* God's grace but the God *of* grace. The difference is noteworthy: the author wishes to call our attention to the inescapable fact that if we are in need of grace, we must, first and foremost, turn to the God of grace. We may have sought grace, but paid little attention to the Grace Giver, through whom only is grace obtainable.

The difference is noteworthy for another reason. Religion, says the author, is an attempt to make some sense of the world that we live in, and how to establish a relationship with whatever force (or god?) we feel might be out there. If there is a god, how can I relate to him, please him, be blessed by him? How can I keep him from getting angry? The answers are organized in systems of doctrines so that people will know what they need to believe and do, which, according to Augustine, is "a precise code or rites designed

to establish a correct relationship with God (or the gods)." Thus, according to Tyner, religion has become a work orientation, which means that the favors of God are received in exchange for our obedience, correct behavior, right thinking, etc. He rightly defines "grace for works" as "Christian commerce." This, he explains, goes back to distant antiquity and to what has been called "the Osirian doctrine of self-justification," and the so-called principle of "negative confession" ("Lord, I did not do it..."). Tyner reminds us that Ellen White affirms that "the idea of doing anything to merit the grace of pardon is fallacy from beginning to end." There is no "system of reciprocity" with God. Hence also Ellen White's insistence that righteousness by works, a kind of "system of reciprocity," is the common factor among all pagan religions.

Contrary to such thoughts stands the true doctrine of grace, defined in both Testaments, and Tyner clearly elaborates on this. Nowhere in the Bible is a single intimation that those who received grace did anything to deserve it. The saving initiative always rests with, and comes from, God, and is freely and totally unmerited.

Tyner is both a student of the Word and a keen observer of theological history. This combination makes his book a delight. Having established the biblical basis for the God of grace, and having shown that grace is the only basis for all Christian beliefs and practice, the book traces in history the contours of deviations and misrepresentations of grace, starting with the post-apostolic age. The author's idea that early persecutions may have led Christians to show to the world that they were really good people – people who did good works – is a provocative and a novel one from which one can understand how the doctrine of works found different ways to creep in.

But back to Tyner's trace of history. During the time of Constantine and the Donatist controversy, both approaches to grace fought bitterly with each other. During the scholastic times with Anthony the Hermit, John Cassian, and Thomas Aquinas, the teaching was that both God's grace and human work are essential for salvation. Then came the Reformation and the rediscovery of the biblical understanding of unmerited grace. This recovery of biblical grace, however, came under fierce attack at the Council of Trent, firmly establishing the current Roman Catholic doctrine of salvation by works, insisting that divine grace and human efforts cooperate to transform us so that we may deserve salvation.

Enter the Adventists. The author leads us on the long, tenuous, and painful journey we have followed dealing with God's undeserved grace for salvation, starting with 1844 and onward. He carefully describes the spirit of the times as the church evolved painfully amidst a time of great

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LOGOS

The gospel, the power of God

by Lowell C. Cooper

A meditation on the supernatural evidence that supports the Apostle Paul's unique definition of the gospel.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Romans 1:16, NKJV).

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation. One compelling way to understand and experience what this means is revealed in a series of events that took place in Philippi during the visit of Paul and Silas in their second missionary journey (Acts 16:12-34).

The apostle and his new traveling companion met with a group of people, mainly women, outside the city for Sabbath worship. A merchant woman named Lydia was there. She came from Asia and probably was not Jewish. She sold a line of products for wealthy people and likely circulated in that niche of society. She listened to Paul and Silas, believed in Jesus, was baptized, and then invited Paul and Silas to stay in her home.

On another day as they went for prayer, a slave girl, possessed by a spirit, caused confusion regarding the work of Paul and Silas. At Paul's command, the evil spirit came out of her. The slave girl's fortune-telling had earned her masters a lot of money. Now their economic prospects were

threatened. Though driven by greed, they cloaked their self-interest in the garb of concern for public safety. They had Paul and Silas dragged before the authorities on the pretext of their creating unrest and unlawful behavior in the city.

Paul and Silas were stripped and beaten, then imprisoned in maximum security. But out of those events of “shame” and unwarranted cruelty, inspiration chronicles a series of almost unbelievable events that illustrate the power of God (Acts 16:22-34). The earthquake was the starter, but our interest here is in the human behaviors that unfold in the story and illustrate the power of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The gospel: The power to respond to bear adversity

The first thing to note is that Paul and Silas sang praise songs in jail in the middle of the night. Beaten, bruised, bloodied – victims of injustice, in physical discomfort and a harsh environment – they broke forth in songs of praise. Joyful singing is not the typical sound of prison life. One might expect shouts of cursing, moans of pain, cries for revenge, foul language of self-justification – but certainly not songs of praise. No wonder all the prisoners were listening!

These two prisoners were different. The power of God *shaped their response to adversity*. It is not that the singing changed their circumstances. Instead, it provided the context. Their bodies still ached. Every movement was accompanied by pain. They were

captives to darkness, discomfort, discouragement, and defeat. They were on a mission for God, and now their journey was in jeopardy. And so they sang songs of praise. What a reaction to setbacks and obstacles!

How do we act when our plans and dreams are destroyed, when trials confront us at every turn, when we find ourselves in the dark prison of uncontrollable circumstances? Paul affirms that “everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12, NIV). We recognize inevitable and incidental setbacks and disappointments in life and learn to adjust to these as simply the realities of life. But what about the difficulties that come into our lives when we are on a mission for God? How does the power of God reveal itself in us when it seems that God is ignoring our situation, when good intentions are thwarted by the evil designs of others?

James Montgomery Boice was a nationally-recognized pastor of a large church in Philadelphia. On May 7, 2000, he announced to his congregation that he was rapidly dying of an aggressive cancer that was unresponsive to treatment.

Boice then asked his congregation: “Should you pray for a miracle? Well, you're free to do that, of course. My general impression is that the God who is able to perform miracles – and He certainly can – is also able to keep you from getting the problem in the first place.... Above all, I would say pray for the glory of God. If you think of God glorifying Himself in history and you say, ‘Where in all of history has God most glorified Himself?’ the answer is that He did it at the cross of Jesus Christ, and it wasn't by delivering Jesus from the cross, though He could have...and yet that's where God is most glorified.”

Eight weeks later, they buried Boice. But his congregation was moved by those words to see a new context for their own lives – whatever happens,

may God be glorified. This is not a natural human response to adversity. It is supernatural.

The gospel: The power to move beyond self-interest

There is another unexpected element in Paul and Silas' jail story. Upon learning the effects of the earthquake, the jailor prepared to take his life. He assumed that the prisoners had escaped and realized that he would be held accountable regardless of the circumstances. He reasoned that to take his own life was a more dignified exit than public humiliation and execution.

But Paul interrupted him, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here" (Acts 16:28, NKJV). He then assured him, consoled him, proclaimed the gospel to him, befriended him, and baptized him – all in the space of a few hours.

It would not be unnatural for prisoners to find some pleasure in the plight of their captor. After all, the jailor was the impersonal agent of the corrupt system that led to their confinement. Anything that would remove him as an obstacle to their freedom would be welcomed. Whether the jailor committed suicide or was hanged mattered not. His removal, by whatever means, symbolized the overthrow of the system.

What is not expected is that Paul and Silas would have compassion on the jailer – this accomplice to their unjust imprisonment. The power of God in their lives *enabled them to move beyond the boundaries of self-interest and self-orientation*, even to the point where they could be actively concerned about the welfare of their presumed enemy. That is not natural. It is supernatural.

C. S. Lewis wrote about the "weight of glory" that rests on the shoulders of every human being. He said that if we looked at our neighbors, our competitors, our enemies, and realized the weight of glory that rests on all of them, the weight of glory that embraces them as candidates for eternal life, we would see them differently. And

we ourselves would find emancipation from a narrow focus of self-interest.

The gospel: The power to celebrate oneness in Jesus

This leads us to yet another unexpected discovery regarding the power of God. We have already noted that the wealthy Asian merchant, Lydia, was baptized. The jailer, a Roman citizen and likely retired Roman soldier, was also baptized. Some commentators suggest that the placement of the story of the slave girl implies that she also must have become a believer.

If we accept these baptisms, a very unnatural development is seen in Philippi. An Asian businesswoman, a Greek slave, a Roman civil servant. Three people with very different ethnic, economic, educational, and experiential backgrounds became brothers and sisters in the church at Philippi.

Such an experience was true also in Antioch where Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, slave and free, old and young, male and female, wise and otherwise, under the power of the gospel broke through the silos of natural human affinities and became a family of faith. Brothers and sisters from widely differing pasts were now united in a common future. And the society of the day had no word to describe this phenomenon – so they called them "Christians" (see Acts 11:25, 26).

We sometimes hear the idea that the way to grow the church is to create congregations on the basis of natural human affinities. Maybe that is true. Statistical evidence seems to support this as a way of increasing church membership.

Even if we accept that line of thought and action, we must never forget that the remarkable thing about the early church was not its size, but its spirit. The witness of the early church was powered by what happened in human relationships – not its membership, but its worship and fellowship. The power of the gospel *brought people together from all the*

separate pieces of society. It formed them into a new community of praise to God and love for one another.

The next time you sit in your church, look around for the evidence of the supernatural – for those who praise God in the midst of their adversity, for those who have moved beyond the boundaries of self-interest and self-orientation, for those from all walks of life who have broken through the silos of natural human affinities to celebrate the oneness of all who are claimed by Jesus Christ. The witness of the early church was powered by what happened in human relationships – not its membership, but its worship and fellowship.

Lowell C. Cooper (M.Div., Andrews University, M.P.H., Loma Linda University) is a general vice-president for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. This text is based on a devotional presentation at the General Conference world headquarters. E-mail: cooperl@gc.adventist.org.

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VIEWPOINT

Enriching praise and worship through ACTS

by Alain Gerard Coralie

A four-step process that combines celebration with contemplation.

I love worship services that are fresh, dynamic and innovative. But I also enjoy traditional services, as they provide stability in a fast-changing world. I find no problem in singing Don Moen and Handel. I believe that I don't need to throw away tradition to be in touch with contemporary culture, nor do I need to be stuck in the 18th century to be faithful to God. For that reason, I try to plan worship services that mix celebration and contemplation. Communion with God should pass through thoughts, emotions, and a sanctified imagination.

However, it's easier said than done. I constantly struggle to keep things in balance. Sometimes, I tend to limit worship to notional correctness; sometimes I oversimplify it as a matter of feelings. Interestingly, the more I think about this tension, the more I realize that the tension is present in Adventist worship. Congregations often stress one facet of worship at the expense of the other. Traditionalists tend to stress the cognitive, whereas innovators emphasize the affective. How do we solve this dilemma? Let me share with you a discovery that has helped me reduce this tension.

The secret is this: worship built around the acronym ACTS: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. Some will argue that worship must not be reduced to a four-letter mnemonic. While being

aware of the complexity of worship, I'm convinced that ACTS can draw us to the core of worship, both theologically and experientially.

Worship is a sacred and wonderful experience, and it deserves serious attention. God is not pleased when worship becomes superficial (see Isaiah 29:13). To be pleasing to Him and to build our souls, worship should be thoughtful and participative, intellectually engaging and emotionally fulfilling. It cannot be a relaxing period where we take an intellectual leave for an hour in order to have some spiritual entertainment. Instead, worship is a divine encounter, an attitude of the soul, an act of obedience of the heart. It is a response to God's self-revelation. As such, it requires our best: to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37).

While ACTS can inform and structure all aspects of worship service, in this article I want to focus on the song service. More and more contemporary Adventist worship services have a P&W (praise and worship) section where a worship team leads the congregation in a number of songs and choruses. This 10- to 20-minute song service is very popular in the life of many churches. However, if it's done badly, worshipers might come out of it with the impression they've been intoning singsongs around a campfire. In worst cases, congregants might feel that they've been attending a concert because of the worship team's theatrical performance or choreographed spontaneity.

Are you willing to lead P&W sessions in such a way that they reach

sacred heights? Perhaps a good point to start off with is to remember that the purpose of singing hymns and choruses is to stimulate remembrance and induce an attitude. As we worship through songs, we celebrate God's mighty acts in history by recounting His wondrous deeds. Further, as we gladly come into His presence, we elevate our entire being to that which is pure and holy. Essentially, to lead worship is to stand on holy ground in the very presence of the Lord of glory.

Let's apply the ACTS principle to the praise and worship part of our service:

Adoration

Always start a P&W session with adoration. Worship is God-centered, not people-centered. In other words, our worship should be centered on God, not on humans. Adoration, musically speaking, is that time in which the congregation acknowledges God's majesty and acquaints itself more fully with His matchless character. The Bible presents Him as a living God who reigns in majesty, exalted over all creation. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the one in whom we have our being. He is holy, righteous, wise, true, faithful, loving, and merciful. From this perspective, good worship leaders choose songs that lavishly extol God's attributes. They stay away from vacuous praise songs that are high in repetitiveness but low in spiritual substance.

In your P&W service, start off with songs that exalt God *for who He is*. Basically, songs of adoration need to induce a spirit of awe and reverence to the worshiping community. They must elevate the mind from the mundane and the transient to fix it on eternal realities. As a worship leader, draw from the rich tapestry of Christian hymnody to attain this goal. Worship is the time when we move forward to meet our God (Psalm 100); it is also the moment when God comes to visit His people in a special way. The Bible

teaches that He sits in the midst of the praise of His people (Psalm 22:3). Thus in worship we have the privilege of coming in touch with the great and mighty God. Nevertheless, as we approach God in the beauty of His holiness, we also become aware of our sinfulness and unworthiness. This is why confession becomes mandatory.

Confession

Confession means acknowledging our bankruptcy. It is the realization that even our very best comes short of the glory of God. Confession of sin necessarily involves acknowledgment of God as the Lord who rules with authority and the necessity for us to align our lives to His will. As our Maker, He deserves our homage and obedience. And yet, because of our sinful nature, we constantly fail to do so. Hence, true worship demands confession. As we draw closer to the throne of grace, we need to clear away the things that stand between us and our God. This can only be done under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

As a worship leader, find appropriate songs that express confession. To make confession of sin a part of worship is extremely important. However, there is no need to make it dreary or ghoulish. To quote John Stott: "There is nothing morbid about the confession of sins, so long as we go on to give thanks for the forgiveness of sins. It is fine to look inwards, so long as it leads us immediately to look outwards and upwards again."¹ Thus, confession must lead us to thanksgiving in gratitude to what God has done to us through Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving

In adoration, we praise God for who He is; in thanksgiving, we celebrate Him *for what He has done*. While adoration focuses upon God's nature and character, thanksgiving focuses upon the manifestation of His goodness toward us. God's Word commands, "Give thanks in all circumstances"

because "this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18, NIV).

Through His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus has restored the relationship that should exist between humanity and God. Through Him alone can sinners be reconciled to God and worship Him. His love for us demands our highest gratitude. Hence, thanksgiving requires a Christ-centered focus. Ellen White comments: "Christ and Him crucified should be the theme of contemplation, of conversation, and of our most joyful emotion.... Let us with reverent joy come before our Creator."²

In accomplishing this task, use old and modern hymns which are imaginatively rich and theologically grounded in order to draw worshipers to Christ and His matchless love. The scandal of our time is the use of songs that trivialize the Christian faith by painting it in rosy and ethereal terms and demanding from us a sappy sort of spirituality.

Pursuant to the theme of thanksgiving is our attitude to God for His loving involvement in our daily lives. The One who directs the galaxies also watches over us. As worship leaders, be alert to signs of God's movement in the life of His people. Wherever possible, give the opportunity for individuals to testify of God's goodness toward them. Short testimonies can play an important part in P&W.

Supplication

Since God has chosen to work for and through His people, close the P&W session with supplication. Two forms of supplication – petition and intercession – are important. First, plead with God to intervene in the life of the worshiping community. There can be no teaching, no preaching, no healing of human brokenness, no genuine communion unless worshiping communities are baptized into the creative and life-giving power of the divine Spirit. Since God is eager to

bless His people, use songs that invite the Holy Spirit to come and touch, restore and strengthen His people.

After petitioning God for the needs of the congregation, move to intercession. In intercession, we lift the needs of the community – family members, neighbors, leaders and those in influential positions – and we pray for global issues such as justice for the poor or relief of suffering. In a fallen world, it is important to be our brothers' keepers. The worship service is not an oasis where we escape the world; rather, it is an opportunity to recharge our spiritual batteries to meet its needs. Intercession is one way by which a world of love and hate, of joy and sorrow, of victories and losses is presented to God in compassion and hope.

Viewed from this perspective, worship cannot be a self-serving event but must be a privileged moment for serving God by means of serving others. This essential link between fellowship and service has to be upheld if we want corporate worship to reflect true Christianity. Only then will the church be equipped to minister in the wider world as part of God's plan of reconciliation.

To accomplish that, ACTS provides a jump start.

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1. John Stott, *Christian Basics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p.122.
2. Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1956), pp. 103, 104.

FIRST PERSON

Keeping the faith

by Christy Sanggalan-Doroy

No one knows when that day will come: the day that tests one's faith. To some, like Joseph, that day can come "daily" in the form of a pursuing beauty. To others, like Daniel, it can come with the threat of a lions' den. To still others, like Paul, it can come every day as part of his daily witness to the gospel. To me it came late in life. I did expect such a day would come many times earlier in life – in elementary school, in secondary school, in university. Each time I feared my early commitment to Sabbath would be put to test. But God's grace was my sole enabling power – every time I faced a Sabbath examination, somehow the Lord opened a way, and my joy was full.

But then came the refiner's fire. Or was it a crushing blow? After completing my university education, I joined the service of the Philippine government. My career blossomed. I climbed steadily up the ladder. After I completed the Certified Public Accountant examination, I was appointed as a financial analyst in a government project funded by the World Bank. Our thrust was poverty alleviation: construction of school buildings, clinics, roads, and livelihood projects in rural areas. Consultants from the World Bank would come from time to time to evaluate the project, and my task was to provide a financial analysis of each project and bring the visitors up to date on the financial status of our work. When these consultants arrived, we had a one-week tour to project sites and a wrap-up meeting to close the visit.

On one such visit, the project director threw that crushing blow. "Our meeting with the World Bank is scheduled for the coming Saturday. Please be ready for the presentation."

I did not have to pause for my answer. My reply was as quick as it was certain. "Ma'am, I'm sorry, I cannot attend our meeting. It's my Sabbath. It's God's holy day, and I'll be as usual at the church."

My director and my officemates did not expect such a forthright reply. I knew my job was at stake. In two more days, Saturday would come, and my job would be....What should I do? Just pray – and prayer had been my strength and joy ever since that day when I gave my heart to the Lord long ago.

My baptism

I was 12 years old then. I wanted to be baptized into the Adventist Church. But my father said I was too young to be baptized. His advice was rather calm and steady. "You should study some more. Understand the Bible better. Make sure of God's teachings. Learn to follow the Lord with all your heart. Make Jesus your best friend."

I followed my father's advice. I joined the Voice of Prophecy school. I accompanied my father to the studies he gave to neighbors. Soon I felt I was ready to be baptized. With that came my firm commitment to keep the Sabbath at all costs.

AMICUS days

But soon tragedy struck. In my junior year in high school, my mother died. After my graduation, I found it hard to proceed to college because of financial problems. Regardless of the hardships, my family encouraged me to go to college. My friends who were members of AMICUS also gave moral support. Since the Adventist college was far from our place, I had no other choice but to enroll in a non-Adventist university in our city.



Joining AMICUS shortly after enrollment, I was glad the group helped me to become active in church, thus strengthening my faith in God. We conducted Voice of Youth evangelism, visited other churches on Sabbath, and engaged in tract distribution, Bible studies, and other activities.

As Adventist students, however, our greatest problem was classes or examinations that fell on Saturdays. In our university, most of the professors didn't give exemptions to Adventist students, which caused some to compromise their faith. During my junior year, the vice president for academic affairs, who disliked Adventists, called three of us who were accounting students to her office. She told us that we were a nuisance to the school because we kept on skipping classes or examinations on Saturdays. She would no longer tolerate such behavior, and we were told to transfer to an Adventist school. But the Lord made a way for me and for my Adventist friends to continue our studies. Some of our teachers sympathized with us by giving special examinations on other days, while our classmates provided us notes of the lectures given on Sabbath. Their support continued until graduation day.

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ACTION REPORT



Photo by Isaac Chita Mayolas

Adventist students in Spain meet for their 23rd annual convention

Two hundred Adventist young people met in December 2007 in Tortosa, Spain, for the 23rd annual convention of the Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Students and Graduates Association (AEGUAE acronym in Spanish). Perhaps the oldest Adventist student association involving Adventist students from non-Adventist campuses, AEGUAE has focused annually on the personal relevance of God, the Bible, and Adventism to life today.

Send us your group's report

Leaders of Adventist university student associations are invited to send a brief report of their group's activities and one or two digital photos for publication in *Dialogue*. Include all relevant information about the student group, describe its main activities, challenges, and plans, and list the name, position, and e-mail address of the report's author. Send them to Susana Schulz at schulzs@gc.adventist.org. Thank you!

"AEGUAE," according to its newly elected president, Sarai de la Fuente, "responds to a clear need of Adventism in Spain. It responds to the need of growing spiritually and intellectually, to walk with great and challenging thinkers of history as well as to walk the greatest Teacher of all."

The 2007 convention featured as guest presenters Drs. Marcel Fernandez of Andrews University and Guillermo Sanchez, co-editor of laexcepcion.com. Sanchez discussed issues pertaining to faith and politics that are discussed in current media. He brought to bear upon current issues the insight of apocalyptic prophecies. Fernandez focused on *Shabbat* as the seal of God within the context of the book of Revelation.

Reactions to the presentations were positive. Sarai de la Fuente's remarks were typical of the feelings of the attendees: "I take with me two ideas from Fernandez: first, to understand the law of God as a law of freedom and liberation, and second, to see the Sabbath as God's seal – a symbol of God's hand extended towards human-

ity. These ideas are simply brilliant." Sanchez's presentation was equally well received, as it showed a new way of relating to and interpreting contemporary church-state relations.

Asked about the challenges ahead for AEGUAE, de la Fuente mentioned two important tasks: first, continuing to stimulate the young university students to grow intellectually and spiritually and be involved in the demands of Adventism in Spain; second, to support and interface with the growth of projects associated with AEGUAE, such as the digital editorial site www.Aula7activa.org, its news page www.a7noticias.org, and the recent agreement with the Association of Adventist Forums to co-edit the Café Hispano blog www.spectrummagazine.org/cafe_hispano.

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Attention, Adventist Professionals

If you hold a degree in any field and have an e-mail 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 Web site:

<http://apn.adventist.org>

Encourage other Adventist professionals to register!

Ghanian students try new ways of campus ministry

by Richard Agyemang and Lydia Oppong



Adventist students present seedlings to the University of Education, Kumasi, Ghana

Creating goodwill, building communication bridges, and active involvement in advancing the good of the community in a university setting are some ways by which Ghana Adventist Student Fellowships have earned better understanding of the needs and problems on the part of the universities in which they study.

For years, Sabbath classes and examinations have been a continuing problem for Adventist students in most universities in Ghana, which follow a six-day schedule and do not make any exemption for keeping the seventh-day Sabbath. Many attempts were made by Adventist student associations and the Union Conference authorities to appeal to the universities on the basis of religious liberty and freedom of conscience, but with little or no success.

After many such attempts, the national Adventist student fellowship decided to try the biblical model of reaching out through friendship and witness, and through letting one's lamp of faith burn with a witness that would be taken note of by various members of the uni-

versity community. Typically, the first thing Adventist students try is to share their faith on the campus and let other students, professors, and administrators know how seriously Adventists take their faith and its relevance to daily life – even if that means forgoing an examination that falls on Sabbath, thus losing an academic year.

More importantly, Adventist students have started community and social involvement.

The Adventist Student Fellowships on the various campuses of higher learning in Ghana have included vigorous community services and provision of essential amenities to their respective university campuses. For example, the Adventist Student Fellowship of the University of Education (Kumasi campus) embarked on a tree-planting exercise on the campus in April 2007. Some 100 seedlings of malitia thongil, royal palm and acacia were planted throughout the campus. The university administration and the entire student body applauded the Fellowship for their creative way of making the campus look greener and better.

Earlier the Fellowship had also embarked on a cleanup campaign.

Such activities on the part of Adventist students did not go unnoticed. In his annual report, the university vice chancellor, Professor Jophus Anamua-Mensah, acknowledged and commended the numerous forms of service the Adventist Student Fellowship has provided for the university campus. Other services Adventist students rendered include providing poly tanks, collecting books (including Ellen White books) for the library, and constructing a bus-stop shed on the campus.

Such involvement by Adventist students to serve the university campus has not only brought appreciation and goodwill but also a better understanding on the part of the academic community of the special needs Adventist students face with regard to their religious faith and convictions, including Sabbath observance. Because of this goodwill and understanding, Sabbath examinations recently have not been an acute problem as they once used to be.

However, Adventist students at the University of Education do face another serious problem. They do not have a regular meeting place where they can worship, fellowship, and meet with other students for social and spiritual purposes. The university facilities are always busy with their regular activities. A place dedicated for Adventist Student Fellowship can enlarge the scope of the ministry of Adventists on the university campus. With this in mind, the Fellowship at the University of Education has purchased a piece of land and is prayerfully waiting for funds to come so that a facility can be built for a better witness and more focused spiritual and social activities. Nothing is impossible when we place our need before God in faith.

The Adventist Student Fellowship can be contacted by e-mail at uewknaas@yahoo.com

CAMPUS LIFE

Understanding the Eastern Orthodox Church

by Eugene Zaitsev

The Orthodox Church is an enigma for most people in the West. While both Orthodox and Protestant Christians reject the papal claim to supremacy, the Orthodox share with Roman Catholics sacramental and liturgical frameworks, Mariology, and veneration of saints and images. Because of these shared positions, Protestants sometimes confuse Orthodoxy with Catholicism. In spite of some outward and doctrinal similarities between Orthodoxy and Catholicism, there are great differences between the two – in history, theology, culture and worship.

To some extent, the anonymity and cultural invisibility of the Orthodox Church is due to the fact that for years Eastern Christianity was closed to the West and was under the close watch of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. With the collapse of communism in the early 90s, Eastern Europe and Russia are more open to the West as never before. Christians of the East and West have had more opportunities to get together, to know, interact, and understand each other better.

So what is Orthodoxy? The Orthodox Church (also termed “Eastern” or “Greek” Orthodox) is the third main body of Christianity after Catholicism and Protestantism. From an etymological perspective, the Greek word “orthodoxy” has the double meaning of “correct belief” and “correct worship.” In the history of the church, this correctness has been affirmed through constant struggle with the “heterodoxy” (different beliefs) of heretics. The Orthodox “regard their church as the church

which guards and teaches true belief about God and which glorifies Him with right worship.”¹

The Orthodox Church is a family of fifteen independent, self-governing churches. Though united in their understanding of sacraments, discipline, doctrine, faith, and worship, these churches administer their internal affairs separately. They choose their own heads, language of worship, and canonization of saints. They make additions to the general Orthodox calendar, establish and abolish parishes, initiate their own missionary activities, etc. As independent churches, they are not bound together by any central organization, nor do they owe allegiance to one particular person as do Roman Catholics with the pope.

The Russian Orthodox Church is the largest, with about 50 million members, although it is difficult to say how many of these are nominal and how many committed. Only three to four percent of Russians attend the Orthodox temple regularly and follow all the rules. Many Russians consider themselves Orthodox just because of their belonging to Russian culture.

The patriarch of the Constantinople Orthodox Church is esteemed as the ecumenical or universal patriarch. As such, he enjoys special honor and a coordinating role in the Orthodox world, but cannot interfere with other Orthodox bodies.

For the Orthodox Church, the Bible is the main written source of divine doctrine. In addition to the 66-book biblical canon accepted by Protestants, the Orthodox church includes in their editions of the Bible the so-called

apocryphal books. They are called deuterocanonical books and have certain authority as the word of God, but less than that of the canonical books.

The Orthodox Church believes that it is the church that gave us the Bible as the word of God in the canon of the sacred books, and therefore we should read the word of God with faith and veneration, in the spirit of the church. The idea that one can oneself discern the word of God is considered illusory.

Thus in the Orthodox belief system, God specifically reveals Himself not only in His Son and in His Word (both Old and New Testaments), but also in the church of the New Testament, in the lives of the saints, in the wisdom of the Fathers, in the dogmatic definitions of the councils, in liturgy, in church art, etc., or in what is called “tradition.” This is a very meaningful word for the Orthodox. Contemporary Orthodox theologians argue that the holy tradition, being more ancient and larger by volume than the Holy Scripture, contains all the fullness of divine revelation. Since the Bible represents only a part of tradition, it is but one expression of revelation.

East and West: Theological difference

What is the major difference between East and West so far as theology is concerned? Theological rationalism is a main characteristic of Western theology. Eastern thinkers, by contrast, begin their thinking about God with a very different mind-set, putting emphasis on the essentially mysterious nature of Christianity. This is why contemplation and vision, not intellectualizing and analysis, characterize the theological task of the Orthodox. As a result, the biblical conception of historic redemption is replaced with the idea of a mystical ascent to God through catharsis (cleansing) or purification, illumination and mystical union. Thus the whole Christian life came to be seen as a mystical ascent or return of the soul to union with God.

This union of human beings with

God or *theosis*, is the main characteristic of the Eastern Church's teaching on salvation.² The Orthodox Church has always understood salvation as a process of constant movement toward *theosis*. Salvation is not only justification or forgiveness of sins; it also means the renewing and restoration of God's image in humans, and the lifting up of fallen humanity through Christ into the very life of God. This is why the central question of Orthodox soteriology is not "salvation from what?" but "salvation for what?"

The most important means of *theosis* is faithful participation in the sacraments. The church and sacraments are the means appointed by God whereby a person acquires the sanctifying Spirit to be transformed into the divine likeness. According to the Orthodox tradition, divine energies are present in the sacraments. By participating in the sacraments, a person may receive those deifying energies, and through them overcome "the natural laws of his psycho-physical self" and become "god" by grace. The sacraments of the church, in particular baptism and the Holy Eucharist, are the divine actions by which God's sacramental grace is communicated to the faithful.

One of the distinctive features of Orthodoxy is the place it assigns to icons. The icon, perhaps, is the most important symbol of the difference between the East and West. The Orthodox Church today is filled with them: a solid screen dividing the sanctuary from the body of the building, called the iconostasis, is entirely covered with icons. Other icons are placed in special shrines around the church. The walls are covered with icons in fresco or mosaic. Orthodox Christians prostrate themselves before icons, kiss them and burn candles in front of them; they are censed by the priest and carried in procession. Icons mark nearly every important milestone in the life of the Orthodox. At baptism, an individual often receives an icon of the saint whose name he or she takes;

at marriage the fathers of the couple bless them with icons; and at burial, icons are at the front of the funeral procession. A Christian life without icons would be unthinkable for an Orthodox believer. It must be noted, however, that not all Orthodox feel the need for icons as an aid to prayer. Many ancient and modern hermits did not use such images, and even the Reverend Seraphim of Sarov, a highly-respected Russian saint of XIX century, recommended one to pray with eyes closed, thereby removing all outward impressions.³

The cult of the saints occupies an important place in Orthodox piety. The saints are considered to be living and active members of the church as intercessors and protectors of people, even though they are in heaven. Their presence in the church is manifest through their pictures and relics. Orthodox theologians emphasize that the saints are not mediators between God and man – this would set aside the Unique Mediator, which is Christ – but they are our friends who pray with us, and aid us in our Christian ministry and in our communion with Christ.

An Orthodox is given the name of a saint upon baptism as a symbol of one's entry into the unity of a church – not just the earthly church, but also the church in heaven. The Orthodox have a special devotion to the saint whose name they bear, usually keeping an icon of their patron saint in their room, from whom they daily ask for intercessions. They observe the festival of their patron saint as their name day, and to most Orthodox, this is a date far more important than one's birthday. In Serbia, for example, each family has its own patron saint, and on the saint's day the family as a whole observes a collective celebration known as the *Slava*.

Orthodox eschatology

Adventists will be interested to know that an inseparable part of Orthodox

teaching comes from what the Bible says about end-time events: the Second Coming of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead, the end of the world, and then the beginning of the kingdom of glory and eternal life.

Orthodox eschatology distinguishes between a particular judgment and a general judgment. The particular judgment concerns the fate of a person after death until the general judgment. According to Orthodoxy, death is the common lot of man. It is not annihilation, but only the separation of the soul from the body. Immortality of the soul is a fundamental doctrine of Orthodoxy.

The Orthodox Church strongly believes in the Second Coming of Christ. The fact that the time is unknown should arouse Christians to a constant spiritual vigilance.⁴ In the great day of the coming of the Son of Man, there will be the universal resurrection of the dead in transfigured appearance. The resurrection of the dead for the universal judgment will be universal and simultaneous, both of the righteous and of sinners.

Meeting an Orthodox Christian

What should someone from the Western Christian tradition consider when meeting an Orthodox person? What would help to establish a friendly relationship? First, respect the Orthodox tradition, history, culture, and their sacred places. Knowledge of some names or historical facts will help break the ice of misunderstanding. Many common factors exist between Adventist and Orthodox traditions, so start a productive dialogue by choosing those doctrines that unite rather than separate. These doctrines include the authority and inspiration of the Bible, Christ as the Savior, the Second Coming, signs of the times, etc. Even the Sabbath may easily become the starting point for a friendly relationship, since the fourth commandment is recognized as binding in the Orthodox tradition. However, issues

such as veneration of the Virgin Mary and immortality of the soul are very sensitive and better avoided at the initial stages of contact. Comments like “the doctrine of the Virgin Mary is totally false or unbiblical” will immediately raise a wall of hostility. Be prudent so as not to offend the religious feelings of the Orthodox you are seeking to befriend.

The matter of icons is another very sensitive issue that might be painful for your new friend to hear about. Be very careful not to characterize veneration of icons as idolatry in the very beginning of your friendship with Orthodox people. Rather than engaging in frequent criticism, just try to present the clear truth from the Word of God. The Bible is very much respected by the Orthodox, but bear in mind that it is commonly believed that the Bible used by Protestants is not authoritative. Using Orthodox editions of the Bible will help to overcome that confusion.

Rather than talking about what is not practiced in the Adventist Church (e.g. the kissing of icons, praying to saints, painting eggs for Easter, etc.), talk about what is encouraged, such as reading the Bible personally, using one’s own words in prayer, being interested in the Christian arts, etc.

As a result of recent historic changes in Eastern Europe, there has been a massive influx of Western Christians into Russia and East European countries. To minister in the East with cultural sensitivity and to gain respect from them, Westerners need to master the basics of Orthodox life, history, and thought. This is especially true given the xenophobia that Orthodoxy has exhibited toward the West and Western Christianity. As the largest Orthodox church in the world, the Russian Orthodox Church is particularly unenthusiastic about the efforts by both Catholics and Protestants to evangelize and proselytize in her own territory. From her perspective, it has been home to Christianity for

more than a thousand years. Western Christians who go to Russia should know that for hundreds of years, Orthodoxy has been perhaps the single greatest factor in shaping its culture. Even 75 years of atheism could not erase that enormous cultural influence. Western missionaries should be aware that even today Orthodoxy is much more than simply a church – this is so, for Russians in particular; it is central to an entire way of life and culture.

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NOTES

1. Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), p. 16.
2. Since the Greek term *theosis* was translated into English as deification and divinization, many Western theologians see this concept as very difficult, almost scandalous. This is why both of these terms are seen by many scholars, both Western and Eastern, as inadequate and misleading. Taking into consideration the inadequacy and ambiguity of all equivalents of *theosis* in English, use of the Greek term is preferable.
3. Michail Mudjugin, *The Contemporary Orthodox Ecclesiasticism: The Second Half of the XX-th Century* (Moscow: Biblical Theological Institute, 1995), 105.
4. Timothy Ware notes that one of the most encouraging signs of revival in contemporary Orthodoxy is the renewed awareness among many Orthodox of the Second Coming and its relevance. See Ware, p. 263.

Keeping the faith

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Working life

Thus, keeping the Sabbath holy became part of my life. Everything else – including this fiery test of reporting to the World Bank consultants – was secondary. That day would find me in church. My appointment with my God was more important than any before this world’s important leaders. I would rather be fired from my job than be

unfaithful to God, even for a few hours.

That Saturday, our visitors from the World Bank arrived at the scheduled meeting place. I, of course, was in church. But the visitors found that I was not at the meeting, and I was the chief financial analyst. Even though my analysis and reports were bound, ready, and placed before the visitors, they decided that they could wait for me, and postponed the meeting for the next day. God answered my prayers by touching the hearts of our visitors. My colleagues were astonished. And what’s more, the visitors decided that from then on, no future wrap-up meeting or conference would be scheduled for Saturday.

A day that tested my faith turned into a day of celebration of faith!

Then came another test. After several months, when an important phase of the project was completed, the president of our country came to inaugurate our accomplishments. We were required to join the parade around the city and attend the program in which the president would deliver her speech. The event was scheduled for Saturday.

In our planning meeting my office-mates clamored, “We’ll let Christy attend this time!” The director replied, “Don’t bother Christy. She will never attend any activity on Saturday.” Sitting in a corner, I smiled to hear her defend my Adventist faith.

The journey of faith may have many hurdles, but when that journey is pursued with prayerful faithfulness, God never fails to reward that faith. Even if such reward does not come instantly, it comes in the reckoning of eternity.

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The tenderness...

Continued from page 19

stuttered, searching for the right word, 'I know it may sound strange, but I have to say...I adore him!'"

"I wasn't sure how to respond. 'You say that with some emotion,' I said.

"Well, yes. Everything good I know, everything decent I know, everything pure I know, I learned from Jesus."

"Abruptly, Templeton cut short his thoughts. There was a brief pause, almost as if he was uncertain whether he should continue.

"Uh...but...no,' he said slowly, 'he's the most....' He stopped, then started again. 'In my view,' he declared, 'he is the most important human being who has ever existed.'"

"That's when Templeton uttered the words I never expected to hear from him. 'And if I may put it this way,' he said as his voice began to crack, 'I...miss...him!'"⁵

In that last reaction I sense a universal yearning – the longing for a love that's bigger than ourselves, one that transcends our rebellion and our estrangement and is stable, unchangeable, and unconditional. The love we find in Jesus is all that. It's the tenderest that human hearts can know.

Roy Adams (Ph.D., Andrews University) is the associate editor of the *Adventist Review* and is the author of several books and numerous articles. This article is an excerpt from his latest book, *The Wonder of Jesus* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2007). E-mail: adamsr@gc.adventist.org.

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1. Except as otherwise stated, all Scripture passages are from the New International Version.
2. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), pp. 712, 713.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 713.

4. Brigid Schulte, "Virginia Parents Trying to Unadopt Troubled Boy," *Washington Post*, October 9, 2006, A1, 11.

5. Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), pp. 17, 18.

Ganoune Diop

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by training them all over the world. But in participating in God's mission, the bottom line is still about promoting Jesus Christ, His dignity and sovereignty, and His compassion that He shares with all people groups. So I want to encourage the study center directors to fulfill the mission entrusted to their care in conversation and in partnership with the leaders of the church. Accountability is healthy and the only way to measure efficiency and overcome a sectarian mentality. I want also the readers and students to be conscious of their own role in contextualized ministry in the great universities of the world.

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This interview originally appeared in the *Adventist Review*. This is an adapted and modified version. Used by permission.

Searching...

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popular religious revivals where various groups asserted that faith and works are needed for salvation, while others proclaimed that grace is given unconditionally. As the Adventist Church moved on, under the guidance of the Spirit of Prophecy, Adventists came to the firm affirmation that "righteousness before God is by faith only, without the works of the law... We are saved by Jesus alone, and Jesus saves us by His grace alone, freely given to undeserving people."

Is that the end of the story? Tyner wonders as he comes to the close of the book. Are Adventists today fully and unreservedly ready to confess that grace is the sole and always freely-granted basis of salvation? Or do we have Adventists who fear that free grace would annihilate obedience? The author's questions are meaningful: "Is holiness the way to grace, or the consequence of it? Is it His acceptance of us, or trying to make ourselves acceptable to Him? Does justification cancel out sanctification?"

The book is a challenge for each one of us to find the answer to these questions in the light of the Scriptures and our own experience. Read the book for yourself.

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