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DIALOGUE

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**Religion faces
atheist fundamentalism**

**Minding
your moral conscience**

**Ellen G. White
and mental health**

**Can faith and science
be divorced?**



Volume 21

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EDITORIAL

Stealing past watchful dragons:

Communicating with the postmodern mind

C.S. Lewis is perhaps one of the most successful Christian apologists of our time. Although he was not a theologian or a clergyman, his works contain profound arguments for the truthfulness of Christian claims and the meaning of Christian life. Yet he abandoned the apologetic approach of theological argument after losing a public debate with the philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe at a meeting of Oxford's Socratic Club. It was not that he "lost the argument," but rather, that he saw the limits of debate and propositional arguments to communicate the really big ideas of spiritual truth. He recognized that debate is reductionistic, that disputation awakens the "watchful dragons" of defensiveness, and that meaning is sacrificed in the fray between assertion and counter-argument.

So the eminent author turned to story telling as an instrument to convey great spiritual truths. He saw storytelling as helpful in "stealing past watchful dragons" such as skepticism, defensiveness aroused by debate, and the familiarity with things religious that leads one not to take them seriously.

In order to arouse the imagination of readers to eternal realities, Lewis employed fantasy in the *Chronicles of Narnia*. Likewise, his colleague and friend J.R.R. Tolkien, experimented with mythic story in *Lord of the Rings*. Recognizing the limits of logical arguments as an apologetic device for making a case for faith, they tested whether they might slip past the "watchful dragons" by the use of stories. Said Lewis, "I wrote fairy tales because the Fairy Tale seemed the ideal Form for the stuff I had to say."¹ What Lewis calls fairy tales and children's stories belong to the general genre of "romance" and include literary forms like myth, fantasy, quest, and adventure that call for the reader to engage his or her imagination.

Lewis's own "baptized imagination" played a key role in the creation of Narnia. He says that all seven of the Narnian books "began with seeing pictures in my head" and he wrote: "At first they were not a story, just pictures. The *Lion* all began with a picture of a Faun carrying an umbrella and parcels in a snowy wood. This picture had been in my mind since I was about sixteen. Then one day, when I was about forty, I said to myself: 'Let's try to make a story about it.'"²

Our culture is awash in pictures from the media. Some of those pictures tell a story, and others clutter or pollute our minds and society. Blockbuster films, MTV,



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LETTERS

Appreciation

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I am very happy and grateful to you and your College and University Magazine staff for producing such a high-quality thought-containing articles. Thank you,

Yours sincerely
Robinson R. Kujur
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Pleasant surprise

I write from Villarrica, Paraguay. As I was surfing the Internet, I was pleasantly surprised by this magazine website. I thoroughly enjoyed it. You cannot imagine how beneficial these materials are for us. May God bless you. Keep up the good work; we will be praying for you from this faraway place.

Alfredo J. Peralta
Villarrica – PARAGUAY

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Editorial

Continued from page 3

digital media, and the iPod have replaced books and debate as vehicles to communicate and persuade. The satellite dish or the corner video shop is the library that forms and expresses the ideas of today. We can hardly escape the onslaught of stories, songs, and pictures, whether from our cell phones or the seatback monitor of an airplane at 30,000 feet.

The postmodern mind readily devours these images, with few filters. It accepts cultural relativity and the power of story and personal truth(s) and rejects the notion of absolute truth. As a result, the time-honored Adventist approach to proof-text an unbeliever into conversion has limited power to influence the postmodern mind. But by means of storytelling, Adventist theology can be hidden in a Trojan horse left behind enemy lines. Commenting on one of his science fiction stories, C.S. Lewis wrote in a letter to a friend, "Any amount of theology can now be smuggled into people's minds under the cover of romance without their knowing it."³

Jesus Himself used storytelling to communicate truths of ultimate reality and meaning. Consider, for example, the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Through this simple story, Jesus taught for generations to come what it means to seek after eternal life and what it means to love God and love others. Jesus could have used great theological arguments from Creation to incarnation, from exodus to restoration, from Moses to the prophets to prove that all humans are equal, that eternal life is God's gift, and that love knows no frontier. But Jesus chose to disarm His challenger by telling a simple story that taught these great truths and captured the hearts and imagination of people throughout history.

This does not mean we put aside the need for biblical literacy. We must seek the competency to correctly interpret the different forms of biblical writing – poetic psalms, historical records, eyewitness accounts, allegory, theological exposition, etc. For some people, the proof-text method might yet work to persuade them of eternal truths. When it doesn't, you might explore "stealing past the watchful dragons" by means of storytelling. But to tell a story engagingly, you must know the Story yourself and know it well.

In the last editorial, I challenged readers to be cultural critics. This was not a call to retreat into monastic separation from the world. My challenge this time is to courageously and creatively redeem culture and influence it for good using the communication tools and media of today.

– Lisa M. Beardsley, Editor-in-Chief

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Religion faces atheist fundamentalism

by Roy Adams

Faith in the Creator God does not interfere in a person's serious engagement in scientific enterprise

While preaching in Alberta, Canada, last July, I made a passing reference to British atheist Richard Dawkins, taking all of 10 seconds to do it. Never expecting the name to register with anyone in the audience, I was surprised when a young woman approached me about my remarks following the service.

"There's a guy down in my office," she said, "a friend of mine. He's reading Dawkins, and is very impressed. Do you know of anyone who has answered him – any book I might recommend?"

"Alister McGrath," I said as she wrote it down. "The name of his book is *The Dawkins Delusion?*" The book's subtitle is: "Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine."¹ McGrath, an atheist-turned-Christian, received a doctorate in molecular biophysics at Oxford, and his book presents a masterful response to Dawkins. This article focuses on McGrath's response to Dawkins, with my own (lay) critique mixed in. The initial idea for the piece came when I heard McGrath deliver a powerful rejoinder to Dawkins during a conference in Cambridge, England, in April, 2007.

So what is Dawkins about?

Spewing venom

The title of Dawkins' book: *The God Delusion*² says it all – no subtitle needed. And right from the start – in the preface – he puts his cards out on the table for all to see: "If this book works as I intend," he says, "religious readers who open it will be atheists when they put it down" (Dawkins, p. 28).

That cocky forecast makes one shud-

der just a little. *What faith-shattering stuff am I in for?* But then, as if bracing himself for a less than total knockout, Dawkins throws a (derisive) caveat into the mix: "Of course," he says, "dyed-in-the-wool faith-heads are immune to argument, their resistance built up over years of childhood indoctrination" (Dawkins, p. 28).

Getting down to business in chapter 2, this Oxford science professor moves quickly to his major target: "The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction [the words are loaded]: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, blood-thirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully" (Dawkins, p. 51).

As Dawkins sees it, much of the world's problems come from the blind following we give to this and other capricious gods – figments of the human mind. As with John Lennon of Beatles fame, he dares to dream of "a world with no religion." It would be a place with "no suicide bombers, no 9/11 ... no Crusades, no witch-hunts, ... no Israeli/Palestinian wars, no Serb/Croat/Muslim massacres, no persecution of Jews as 'Christ-killers,' ... no shiny-suited bouffant-haired televangelists fleecing gullible people of their money" (Dawkins, pp. 23, 24). (Conveniently, Dawkins ignores the massacres of untold millions by atheists such as Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin.)

Intelligent people don't dabble with religion – and especially not scien-

tists! "Great scientists who profess religion," Dawkins says, "stand out for their rarity and are a subject of amused bafflement to their peers in the academic community" (Dawkins, p. 125). Dawkins says he once asked Jim Watson, "founding genius of the Human Genome Project," "whether he knew many religious scientists today." Watson replied: "Virtually none" (Dawkins, pp. 125, 126).

In response to this claim, however, McGrath has noted that in the very year *The God Delusion* was published (2006), "Owen Gingerich, a noted Harvard astronomer, produced [a book titled] *God's Universe*, declaring that 'the universe has been created with intention and purpose, and that this belief does not interfere with the scientific enterprise.' Francis Collins published his *Language of God*, which argues that the wonder and ordering of nature points to a Creator God, very much along the lines of traditional Christian conception [And] cosmologist Paul Davies published his *Goldilocks Enigma*, arguing for the existence of 'fine-tuning' in the universe" (McGrath, p. 42).

"Underlying the agenda of *The God Delusion*," says McGrath, is that "atheism is the only option for the serious, progressive, thinking person." Religious experience is "associated with pathological brain activity" (McGrath, pp. 33, 66). The gospel, Dawkins says, is fiction (Dawkins, p. 123). And as if appealing to the coming generation still making up its mind, Dawkins proffers something akin to spiritual assurance: "You can be an atheist who is happy, balanced, moral, and intellec-

tually fulfilled” (Dawkins, p. 23).

It’s a conscious, calculated effort on Dawkins’ part – an “epic struggle against religion,” McGrath calls it (McGrath, p. 51). According to McGrath, Dawkins sees science and religion as “locked in a battle to the death. Only one can emerge victorious – and it must be science” (McGrath, p. 46). Dawkins’ goal, says McGrath, is “the intellectual and cultural destruction of religion” (McGrath, p. 24). He thrusts to kill, to finish Christianity off once and for all.

Dawkins’ Achilles heel

The God Delusion is not a small book. Its 420 pages contain a multitude of claims and charges, making a detailed response impossible. With that in mind, I want to zero in on what I consider the Achilles heel of Dawkins’ entire framework.

In a six-point summary of the chapter “Why There Almost Certainly Is No God”³ (the pivotal chapter of the book, I think), Dawkins’ first point

captures perhaps the central issue of the book: “*One of the greatest challenges to the human intellect, over the centuries has been to explain how the complex, improbable appearance of design in the universe arises.*”⁴

How would Dawkins deal with this basic challenge? That’s the issue here.

Two creationist arguments concerned him in this connection: (1) the argument from *improbability*; and (2) the argument from *irreducible complexity*.

1. Improbability. Simply put, the argument from improbability suggests that the complexity we see within and around us demands that there be a superior intelligence behind it all. Or to paraphrase the way Dawkins himself characterized it (quoting Fred Hoyle): The probability of life originating on earth by itself is tantamount to “the chance that a hurricane, sweeping through a scrapyard [*sic*], would have the luck to assemble a Boeing 747” (Dawkins, pp. 137, 138).

But however apparently convinc-

ing, says Dawkins, such arguments are made only by those who know nothing about the process of natural selection (Dawkins, p. 138).

Citing Daniel Dennett (whom he describes as the “scientifically savvy philosopher”), Dawkins argues that it does not take “a big fancy smart thing to make a lesser thing.” The uninitiated would attempt to make their case for intelligent design by suggesting that “you’ll never see a horseshoe making a blacksmith” or “a pot making a potter.” But, says Dawkins confidently, “*Darwin’s discovery of a workable process that does that very counter-intuitive thing is what makes his contribution to human thought so revolutionary*”⁵ Incredible!

What’s being advocated here by Darwin, Dennett, and Dawkins is that, however counter-intuitive, horseshoes do, indeed, make blacksmiths! An extraordinary thought, indeed!

And how does it happen? Not by *chance* (Dawkins hates that word), but by *natural selection* (see Dawkins, p. 145). “Natural selection,” Dawkins says, “is the champion crane of all time. It has lifted life from primeval simplicity to the dizzy heights of complexity, beauty and apparent design that dazzle us today” (Dawkins, p. 99).

The upshot of his argument is that since natural selection is responsible for all we see around us, “God ... is a delusion” (Dawkins, p. 52). Such logic boggles the mind and calls on people to abandon common sense.

2. Irreducible complexity.

Popularized by Michael J. Behe in *Darwin’s Black Box*,⁶ irreducible complexity suggests that the life forms we know today – even the simplest ones – are comprised of interlocking, interdependent components, too complex to have evolved piecemeal through chance or natural selection. In this connection, Darwin himself pointed to the eye as posing a particularly challenging problem – and Dawkins repeats the master’s words in his book. Darwin said: “To suppose that the eye with all

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its inimitable contrivances for adjusting the focus to different distances, for admitting different amounts of light, and for the correction of spherical and chromatic aberration, could have been formed by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest degree” (Dawkins, pp. 148, 149).

It’s an extremely cogent observation. But Darwin (with Dawkins following) would find a way around it. Darwin’s statement, according to Dawkins, was merely a “rhetorical device” to lure his opponents closer to him so he could administer a more powerful punch. And that punch, says Dawkins, “was Darwin’s effortless explanation of exactly how the eye evolved by gradual degrees” (Dawkins, p. 149).

Dawkins’ own explanation of such a feat is to fall back on a parable he’d used in an earlier book, *Climbing Mount Improbable*.⁷ He imagines a mountain with a sheer cliff on one side, “impossible to climb.” But “on the other side is a gentle slope to the summit.” “On the summit,” he further imagines, “sits a complex device such as an eye.” Intelligent design proponents would suggest that such complexity “could spontaneously self-assemble,”⁸ but that’s an “absurd notion,” he argues; for that would be like “leaping from the foot of the cliff to the top in one bound” (Dawkins, p. 147).

However, Dawkins suggests that evolution, rather than taking the steep side of the mountain, does it the proper way. It “goes around the back of the mountain and creeps up the gentle slope to the summit: easy!”

So the picture Dawkins draws is that of a vast quantity of primordial materials (as if we know where such things might come from!) slowly ascending “Mount Improbable,” each particular unit at some point arriving at the maximum state of complexity, and then somehow linking up with other complexities to form discrete, living, functioning entities! Perhaps impressed himself by the fantasy of

it all, Dawkins says that “if genuinely irreducible complexity could be *properly demonstrated*, it would wreck Darwin’s theory” (Dawkins, p. 151, italics supplied).

But irreducible complexity needs no *demonstration*; it’s reality. And it’s difficult to see why anyone would substitute Dawkins’ irrational speculation for the simple gravity of the biblical affirmation: “In the beginning God created ...” (Gen. 1:1, KJV).

Where I come down

The contemporary period has seen a spate of attacks on God, the Bible, and all things religious – in works such as D. C. Bennett’s *Breaking the Spell* (2006)⁹; D. Mills’ *Atheist Universe* (2006)¹⁰ and Christopher Hitchens’ *God Is Not Great* (2007).¹¹ As I rode a bus in Chicago in early November, I fell into conversation with a fellow conference attendee who, before we parted, handed me a flyer for a book by a certain Bob Avakian, titled *Away With All Gods!*¹²

It’s a veritable anti-God epidemic, much of it related to pseudo-scientific philosophy. And it would be easy for us to vacate the field, curling our tails between our legs like frightened dogs. After all, many of us (myself first) are not scientists and, if you’re like me, are hesitant to enter the gated scientific community without permission. Yet as free-thinking human beings, we have a right, I think, not to bow to an atheist fundamentalism, every bit as intolerant as its religious opposite.

Dawkins represents that kind of intolerance. McGrath, himself a scientist, describes Dawkins as offering “the atheistic equivalent of slick hellfire preaching, substituting turbocharged rhetoric and highly selective manipulation of facts for careful, evidence-based thinking.” It’s an “abuse of the natural sciences in the interest of atheist fundamentalism,” says McGrath (McGrath, p. 11). Following a series by Dawkins on the BBC, McGrath says – a series designed to leave viewers

with the impression that religion is the root of all evil – “one senior atheist scientific colleague at Oxford said to me ... : ‘Don’t judge the rest of us by this pseudointellectual drivel!’” (McGrath, p. 51).

Two points to finish:

1. Like McGrath, I’m not impressed by Dawkins’ selective use of religious institutions and people to make his point. “There is ... a lunatic fringe to every movement,” McGrath suggests. “[And] one of the most characteristic features of Dawkins’ antireligious polemic is to present the pathological as if it were normal, the fringe as if it were the center, crackpots as if they were mainstream” (McGrath, p. 22).

Still, I find it beyond unfortunate that Christians, of all religious people, should have provided Dawkins and other atheists so much fodder for their attack. When Dawkins maligns the religious education of children, for example, he is able to point convincingly to flagrant abuses of children committed within Christian religious education settings. Shame on us!

To cite another example, British atheists are raising funds to plaster London buses with posters flaunting their agenda. The banners say: “There is probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life.” Richard Dawkins has pledged to match donations up to more than US \$9,000. There’s been an enthusiastic response from certain sectors of the British public. “Spread the word,” one contributor said gleefully, “and consign this superstitious nonsense to the dustbin of history!”¹³

What I found most grating about it all was that the campaign came about in reaction to Christian advertisements on those same buses, with a Web address for a site that condemned the unconverted to an “eternity in ‘torment in hell.’”¹⁴ What if those who placed those Christian ads had bothered to stay faithful to Scripture on that sensitive point?

2. Nobel Prize-winning Oxford

immunologist Peter Medawar makes the point that there are “transcendent” questions “science cannot answer, and that no conceivable advance of science would empower it to answer.” Questions such as: “*How did everything begin? What are we all here for? What is the point of living?*”¹⁵

Such questions have to do with *protology and eschatology*. Protology, the study of origins (how we got here, etc.), occupied us briefly under the previous section: “Dawkins’ Achilles Heel.” And we saw a little of Dawkins’ tortured attempt to grapple with it. Here we note the bleakness of his eschatology – what he himself calls “the ultimate fate of our universe.” “Depending upon the values ... [of certain numbers],” he says, “our universe may be destined to expand indefinitely, or it may stabilize at an equilibrium, or the expansion may reverse itself and go into contraction, culminating in the so-called ‘big crunch’” (Dawkins, p. 174).

What a bleak picture! Bleaker still if we put it in the words of Bertrand Russell, one of Dawkins’ philosophical mentors. Russell envisioned that “all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noon-day brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system.”¹⁶

Why would one accept that dismal prospect in place of what the Bible offers? Here it is, in all its elegance, from the seer of Patmos:

“I saw Heaven and earth new-created. Gone the first Heaven, gone the first earth, gone the sea. I saw Holy Jerusalem, new-created, descending resplendent out of heaven, as ready for God as a bride for her husband. I heard a voice thunder from the Throne: ‘Look! Look! God has moved into the neighborhood, making his home with men and women! ... He’ll wipe every tear from their eyes. Death is gone for good – tears gone, crying gone, pain gone.’ ... The Enthroned continued, ‘Look! I’m making everything new. Write it all down – each word dependable and accurate’” (Rev. 21:1-4; 22:4, *The Message**).

That’s where I come down.

Roy Adams (Ph.D., Andrews University) is an associate editor of *Adventist Review*. This article was first published in a slightly different form in *Adventist Review*. Used by permission.

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- * *The Message*, was written in a contemporary language, current and fresh and understandable.

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Minding your moral conscience: Lessons from Huss and Jerome

by Duane Covrig

An examination of the conflicts experienced by Huss and Jerome invite us to better understand our own conflicts, our world, and the purposes of God

Doug Marlette draws the cartoon of Doris the Parakeet. Doris is about to eat a chocolate. Then she hears: “Doris, this is your conscience speaking! Put down the chocolate.” Doris looks to her right. She says, “How do I know you’re my conscience? Show me your badge.” “I don’t have a badge,” comes back the response. “Well, no dice, Mister! Do you know what you can get for impersonating a conscience?” “Well, no . . .uh, I never . . .” In the last frame, Doris smiles, “With a conscience, your best defense is a good offense!”

This cartoon speaks deeply to my own struggle to understand moral conscience. For most of my life, I didn’t have the guts and bravado of Doris to stand up to my conscience. I shared more with Martin Weber’s struggle in his *My Tortured Conscience*.¹ I experienced a demanding sense of right and wrong. And this wasn’t because my parents were strict. They were quite open and reasonable. It was because I became fanatical in my late teens and early twenties, partly due to my own mental imbalances and partly a response to a schism raging through our Northern California Adventist community in the late 1970s and early 1980s. I wanted to get my spiritual duties right and got fanatical in the process. I became miserable to live with. I didn’t even like living with myself.

What made this battle difficult was

that I knew I couldn’t just run away from my conscience. I knew it wasn’t safe to do so. I grew up in California, where I saw many Doris the Parakeets talk down their consciences. They had all kinds of “good offenses” to quail their conscience. Sensuality and selfishness dulled their senses. But I also knew this picky conscience was not always good.

In this article, I review the experience of John Huss as recorded in *The Great Controversy*² to help show the limits of conscience and how to balance it with God’s Word.

John Huss

John Huss had grown up a faithful and ardent student of the Roman Catholic Church. Most of his thinking was influenced by his religious community’s traditions and the common writings used in his priesthood. He grew in character and rose in influence in both the church and the Bohemian nation. His pious living also made him disgusted with the evil practices of some of the contemporary church leaders.

In the process of wanting to better understand how to improve his influence, he began to learn more directly from Scripture and found new understanding of the principles of God’s kingdom. His reading of Scripture challenged his own fundamental thinking and convictions about his church. As he wrestled with the

authority of the church and his growing understanding of Scripture, a deep conflict developed. This angst brought a deep torment. Ellen White, quoting Wylie, noted:

“The mind of Huss, at this stage of his career, would seem to have been the scene of *painful conflict*. . . . The Roman church was still to him the spouse of Christ, and the pope was the representative and vicar of God. What Huss was warring against was the abuse of authority, not the principle itself. This brought on a terrible conflict between the *convictions of his understanding* and *the claim of his conscience* *This was the doubt that tortured him hour by hour.*”³

The conflict seemed to rage between “convictions of . . . understanding” and the “claims of . . . conscience.” And what a war that must have been for a pious priest. When I first read this, I wanted to shout “Huss, go with your claims of conscience. You have to live with your conscience. Let that trump your understanding and end your painful conflict.” But as I read more, and came to understand the liberty that *The Great Controversy* was trying to promote, I saw something different. (Yes, the very book most often used to scare some Adventists with end-time fanaticism had become for me a profound reminder of the liberating effects of the gospel through true reformations.) Plus, my own experience

in life was teaching me the limits of conscience.

Huss' conscience had been partly trained by God and partly by the authority of the papal system. He struggled to distinguish between what his reading of the Bible was telling him and the feelings of conscience that were developed from childhood. Years of conformity to the Roman Catholic Church had formed convictions that were being challenged by what he was reading and understanding from Scripture. This torment was like his brain was pitted against itself. He felt compelled to obey the church – it had been an authority in his life, but at the same time he began seeing a new authority, that of the Bible.

Wylie tells us that Huss resolved this painful conflict with “nearest the approximation to a solution.” He saw “that it had happened again.” What had happened again? Huss was reflecting on the past to understand his present. What had happened again was the same persecution against Jesus. Wylie continued: “As once before in the days of the Saviour, that the priests of the church had become wicked persons and were using their lawful authority for unlawful ends.”⁴ Huss was not ready to propose transferring authority away from the church, but he had enough sense to conclude that authority and power were being misused. This led Huss to a general principle or guide that he used and encouraged others to use. That rule was that “the precepts of Scripture, conveyed through the understanding, are to rule the conscience.”⁵ This was the solution that alleviated his conflict. It was also the solution that set in motion the engine of the Reformation. I saw it as my solution also.

White's use of Wylie's emphasis on an approximation of a solution is fitting. We always think the Reformers' minds had 100 per cent clarity about what they were doing. No. They were coming out of false ideas, but never

completely, or fully, and only with approximations. This takes painful learning, and learning is about approximations.

Understanding is not something God destroys in order to get our moral compliance. It is something He increases to win our moral obedience and faithfulness. Wylie does not say a solution was found but an “approximation.” Meaning gets constructed, abolished, and temporarily rebuilt. Approximations suggest that later, “better” solutions might be found. We can trust that each day dawns clearer and brighter, and God will continue to reveal more and more to us (Proverbs 4:18; 2 Peter 1:19-21). Thus, the Reformation never ended, and it should never end for us.

The pains of Huss' conflict “led him to adopt for his own guidance, and to preach to others for theirs, the maxim that the precepts of Scripture, *conveyed through the understanding, are to rule the conscience*; in other words, that God speaking in the Bible, and not the church speaking through the priesthood, is the one infallible guide”⁶ His safeguard can become ours.

God turned the penetrating light of liberty on Huss. Light broke through the darkness. God loved Huss and wanted His servant to experience deep liberation. Huss responded to this liberation. But the results were costly. The response from the papal authorities was horrible. Soon they got the political authorities also to work against Huss. Both groups used “evil imagination” and control of conscience to scorn Huss' newfound ideas. If one reads the abusive statements made against Huss (available on the Internet), one can see how they used religious reasons against him. Satan gave them religious words and moral phrases designed to torment Huss.

Ellen White describes the final stages of Huss' life. As religious and political leaders saw Huss resist their false claims, they were “witnesses of this

first great sacrifice in the long struggle by which liberty of conscience was to be secured.”⁷ White put her finger on this as the first great sacrifice. Why? Because it was the first real recognition in modern times that even within us, in our minds, we are captive to deep forces that resist God's rule, even to the point of using conscience against understanding.

Jerome's lesson

The story of Huss has helped me fortify myself against the false claims of an overanxious conscience. However, having cautioned against the abuse of claims of conscience, I need to remind the reader of the other extreme.

This caution comes from the life of Jerome just after Huss died. While Jerome was imprisoned awaiting his own death, his “fortitude gave way, and he consented to submit to the council” even to the point of “condemning the doctrines of Wycliffe and Huss.” “By this expedient, Jerome endeavored to silence the voice of conscience and escape his doom.”⁸

There it is again, the conscience. This time it should have been heeded. Now the role of understanding again comes to the aid. “But in the solitude of his dungeon he saw more clearly what he had done. He thought of the courage and fidelity of Huss, and in contrast pondered upon his own denial of the truth. He thought of the divine Master whom he had pledged himself to serve, and who for his sake endured the death of the cross.”⁹

God *individually* and *corporately* works to bring understanding that alone can sustain moral conscience. The mercy of the Teacher allowed another test for His student Jerome, and this time Jerome went all the way to the stake because of the right blending of understanding and conscience. Yes, Jerome was later haunted by his missteps, but grace and truth shone brighter and in union of understanding and conscience, Jerome

became a martyr for the grace we have in Christ.

Liberty, conscience, and morality

An examination of the conflicts experienced by Huss and Jerome informs our own. They invite us to better understand our own conflict, our world, and the purpose of God in bringing us better understanding. Ellen White observes that the purpose of her pointing out these struggles in the lives of God's people is "not so much ... to present new truths concerning the struggles of former times, as to bring out facts and principles which have a bearing on coming events."¹⁰ Understanding the basis of moral conscience can prepare us for

the challenges to religious liberty that we face today and will face in a world trying to make us conform (Romans 12:2).

Ultimately, *religious liberty can only be formed in homes, churches, and nations after it has first been forged in our minds.* And that process is rarely easy. Morality and the conscience that speaks its message is often formed with both good and bad material. One can't just throw it all out. *Nor* can one automatically follow all its dictates. Morality is not God. Conscience is *not* always the voice of God. Morality and conscience both need to be trained. God is the trainer. Morality, and the conscience that carries it, may be likened to salt. Salt is essential in our food, but salt doesn't make for food

by itself. It has to be mixed with other ingredients, or it will become toxic and destructive. Liberty is one of those other ingredients that morality needs. Morality in the absence of liberty degenerates into uncreative decision-making, forced obedience, and unthinking conformity. Liberty gives conscience and morality space for choices. That space creates deep psychological as well as social opportunity for ethical growth. Without that, a person or group or whole nation can pursue morality in a way that can feed a deeper rebellion, or a mindless conscience that acts out a moral script that is blind to human need.

Herein lies the deep tension: morality and conscience purify and motivate humans to do right, but morality and conscience in and of themselves can only stay helpful when informed by understanding and by the Bible.

So, this is my simple advice. First, you need your conscience. Don't throw it away. Second, your conscience needs to be trained.

Some exercises and questions to train your conscience with God's Word

God is constantly at work teaching us, helping us learn new understanding that can liberate us from evil – which can even masquerade as good. Here are some exercises and questions to help you think about that process.

Talk with a close friend about difficult changes in Scripture that would have been hard for pious peoples' consciences to accept. Here are some examples:

- **The Bronze serpent** – Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the desert. Those who looked to it were saved (Numbers 21). The Jewish people kept that bronze serpent for hundreds of years. Eventually that good thing became a bad thing, so Hezekiah had to destroy it (2 Kings 18:4). How hard might it have been for some Jewish leaders to accept Hezekiah's act?

- **Circumcision** – God told Abraham (Genesis 17) and Moses to circumcise males. It was God's command. But after Christ rose from the dead, Paul believed this practice was no longer needed (Romans 2). How did Paul come to that understanding? What tradition was he working against? What Scriptures did he appear to violate? What scripture did he actually uphold in his reform?

When Christ was most hated, He was able to predict a time when His name would be very popular and people would be saying "Lord, Lord," and claim to worship Him but not be loyal to His teachings. How can even worship of Jesus and the Cross become equally distorted like circumcision and the brazen serpent eventually were in the Bible? How does this teach us to keep learning with God?

Ellen White wrote, "God permitted great light to shine upon the minds of these chosen men ... but they did not receive all the light that was to be given to the world."¹¹ What light is God sharing today that is creating reform? How are we receiving or rejecting that liberating light? How do we test our conscience? Might there be a torture of our own souls as we give up cherished views to accept "a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn and the morning star arises in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19, NASB)?

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Ellen White and mental health therapeutics

by Merlin D. Burt

Ellen G. White was no stranger to mental health issues. She personally wrestled with depression in her conversion process as a young person, and her family faced some challenges as well. Her husband experienced strokes during midlife that seemed to have altered his personality. A few of her siblings' children suffered from mental illness, and even her own son Edson may have had an attention deficient disorder. In her spiritual counseling work, Ellen White often addressed matters of the mind. As seen in the last issue of *Dialogue*, she frequently wrote and spoke to individuals who were affected by emotional and mental difficulties. She always extended hope and pointed to a loving heavenly Father and a tender Savior who can heal and deliver those who are wounded and broken by sin and life's adversities.

In dealing with mental illness and health issues, however, Ellen White wrote strongly against the use of drugs and against "psychology." From this, some have concluded that Ellen

White was against the modern application of these modalities in dealing with mental illness. Such a stand is far from accurate. In order to correctly understand Ellen White's views about a therapeutic approach to mental healing, one must understand the 19th century context of her writings.

Before we go into that, we must note two vital points. First, Ellen White frequently underscored the vital importance of mental health. "The mind controls the whole man. All our actions, good or bad, have their source in the mind. It is the mind that worships God and allies us to heavenly beings."¹ Second, she recognized the effect of physical health on the mind. "All the physical organs are the servants of the mind, and the nerves are the messengers that transmit its orders to every part of the body, guiding the motions of the living machinery."²

Use of drugs in therapy

Because of the confused and problematic state of drug therapy during

most of Ellen White's lifetime, she had little or nothing to say about the medicinal treatment of mental illness. Her philosophical basis for healing and mental health therapy was more wholistic, emphasizing spiritual, hydrotherapeutic, and natural remedies. She wrote:

"Pure air, sunlight, abstemiousness, rest, exercise, proper diet, the use of water, trust in divine power – these are the true remedies. Every person should have a knowledge of nature's remedial agencies and how to apply them. It is essential both to understand the principles involved in the treatment of the sick and to have a practical training that will enable one rightly to use this knowledge."³

The 19th century was a time of confused and fallacious philosophies of healing. The default treatment modality was the "traditional" heroic therapy advocated by Benjamin Rush. He advocated bloodletting, blistering, and the use of emetics to relieve "fevers" or "vascular tension" that he believed caused illness. This included the internal use of drugs such as calomel and the topical use of caustic chemicals. Calomel was a mercury compound used as a purgative. The poor person's alternative to "traditional" physicians was the Thompsonian approach. Samuel Thompson said that all disease was caused by cold. He therefore sought to increase the body's natural heat. He used lobelia, an American plant that had sedative and emetic characteristics. Other philosophies of healing included homeopathy, which purported that small doses of drugs that produced the symptoms of a disease in a healthy person could cure

This is the second of a two-part series on Ellen G. White and mental health. The first part, in the last issue, discussed how she understood mental health. This understanding came from her biblical view of humans, as God's created beings, and her understanding of sin and its effects upon human beings. Her views rose from her close relation with God, personal experience, mental health challenges within close circles, and her role as a spiritual counselor. In this second part, the author deals with why Ellen G. White opposed certain therapeutic methods used in her time to cure mental illness.

– Lisa Beardsley

the same disease. By the time of the American Civil War, homeopathy was the preferred method of treatment by physicians who had rejected “heroic therapy.” Beyond these therapies, there were many other treatments that had questionable philosophical bases and used drugs such as opiates, arsenic, and quinine, together with various plant and root products of often-unknown origin. These were usually suspended in alcohol.

Little wonder that Ellen White wrote against the use of drugs during her lifetime. In one of her classic statements, she said: “There are more who die from the use of drugs, than all who could have died of disease had nature been left to do her own work.”⁴ She was not opposed to the use of drugs when they had lifesaving results, even when the drug was dangerous. For a time in the treatment of malaria, quinine was the only known drug. Ellen White indicated, “We are expected to do the best we can,” and “if quinine will save a life, use quinine.”⁵

The modern use of drugs in psychiatric treatment has a more physiological basis and would follow Ellen White’s position that doctors understand the “principles involved in the treatment of the sick.” Were she present today, she would probably still argue that natural methods are best where possible but that physiologically-based drug therapy has its place.

Ellen White’s statement against psychology

Three schools of healing prevalent in Ellen White’s time – mesmerism, phrenology, and rest cure – influenced her comments on psychological and mental health issues. White was strongly opposed to all three. In 1862, she wrote: “The sciences of phrenology, psychology, and mesmerism are the channel through which he [Satan] comes more directly to this generation and works with that power which is to characterize his

efforts near the close of probation.”⁶

Mesmerism. During her early ministry, Ellen White was forced to repeatedly confront mesmerism and its mind-manipulating methods. In the United States during the mid-19th century, animal magnetism was a popular philosophy of healing. Originated by Viennese physician Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815), it taught that an invisible magnetic fluid permeated the universe. Mesmer theorized that disease produced an imbalance of this fluid within the human body, which could be cured through the use of magnets and electrical current. He eventually abandoned the use of magnets and proposed that the “healer’s body” “permeated with animal magnetism, could redirect the patient’s magnetic fluid without the use of magnets.” The goal was to induce a “crisis” by altering the subject’s mental state through fever, delirium, convulsions, uncontrolled weeping, and nervous twitches. Mesmer saw these manifestations as healthy symptoms of healing. Suggestibility and dominance were used to produce a trance and thus realign the body.⁷ James Braid later redefined the term “mesmerism” as hypnotism, and Mesmer became known as the father of modern hypnosis.⁸

During 1845, Ellen White was forced to confront Joseph Turner, a prominent Millerite Adventist minister in Maine. Turner was using mesmerism. He even tried to mesmerize or hypnotize White. On one occasion in Poland, Maine, she was at a meeting where he sought to manipulate her. She recollected: “He had his eyes looking right out of his fingers, and his eyes looked like snakes eyes, evil.”⁹ Her experiences in confronting this man, together with her visionary guidance, placed her in opposition to hypnotic mind-controlling modalities that removed a person’s God-given mental independence and freedom. She wrote very directly and

specifically on this topic: “It is not God’s purpose that any human being should yield his mind and will to the control of another, becoming a passive instrument in his hands.... He is not to look to any human being as the source of healing. His dependence must be in God.”¹⁰

In a series of letters during 1901 and 1902 to A. J. Sanderson and his wife, who were the medical directors at St. Helena Sanitarium, Ellen White warned of the dangers of hypnotism. “Cut away from yourselves everything that savors of hypnotism, the science by which satanic agencies work.”¹¹ She identified the feature of hypnotism that most concerned her and revealed one of her core values in mental healing: “The theory of mind controlling mind is originated by Satan to introduce himself as the chief worker to put human philosophy where divine philosophy should be. ... The physician must educate the people to look from the human to the divine.”¹²

Phrenology. Phrenology was a theory popularized in America during the mid-19th century. Popularized by Orson S. Fowler and his brother Lorenzo N. Fowler, phrenology held that the shape of a person’s head determined his or her character and personality. Though based on a fallacious premise, it was widely accepted as authentic during the 19th century. Ellen White became settled in her opposition to this modality. In 1893 she wrote of phrenology as “vain philosophy, glorying in things they do not understand, assuming a knowledge of human nature which is false.”¹³

Rest cure. The “rest cure” modality was championed by Silas Weir Mitchell as the answer to nervous disorders. Mitchell advocated complete rest and an absence of any sensory stimuli. This method demanded that the subject have no visitors, letters, reading, writing, washing, exercise, or even the presence of light

or sound. Rest was to be enforced, uninterrupted, and prolonged. Ellen White contradicted this view: “[T]he sick should be taught that it is wrong to suspend all physical labor in order to regain health.”¹⁴

The philosophical basis of these three 19th-century modalities, though popular at the time, have been shown to be fallacious. When Ellen White used the terms “psychology” and “science,” she was speaking of these spurious and erroneous movements and not the modern definitions of these terms. On one occasion, she even wrote positively when using the term “psychology” in a more general sense: “The true principles of psychology are found in the Holy Scriptures. Man knows not his own value. He acts according to his unconverted temperament of character because he does not look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of his faith.”¹⁵ For Ellen White, correct “psychology” had a high view of the value of human beings as understood in the light of the gift of Jesus and the love of God. For her the goal of psychological study was how to reconnect the person with God as the great healer of the mind and soul.

Receiving psychological guidance

While it has been shown that Ellen White centered her philosophy of mental health and healing on God, she did not exclude the role of humans in cooperating with God. She is clear that God can use counselors to assist in bringing those with mental and emotional illness to healing: “Christ’s servants are His representatives, the channels for His working. He desires through them to exercise His healing powers.”¹⁶ In another similar statement, she wrote: “God designs that the sick, the unfortunate, those possessed of evil spirits, shall hear His voice through us. Through His human agents He desires to be a comforter, such as the world has

never before seen.”¹⁷ She even gave an imperative for counseling. “When a crisis comes in the life of any soul. . . . It is the consistent life, the revelation of a sincere, Christlike interest for the soul in peril, that will make counsel effectual to persuade and win into safe paths.” Those who neglect this work “will have to give an account for their neglect of those whom they might have blessed, strengthened, upheld, and healed.”¹⁸

Ellen White’s own experience as a counselor is an application of this statement. Though not trained in psychology, she helped many to better emotional and mental health during her lifetime. To this day, her writings provide a helpful philosophical and theological framework that supports “medical missionary” activity, as she called it, in the fields of psychiatry and psychology.

Some well-meaning Christians have been unwilling to speak to mental health professionals out of fear that God does not want them to tell another human of their sins or weaknesses. They think that by seeking psychological help they betray their faith because they are looking to humans for help rather than to God. But Ellen White is clear that there are places where it is correct and proper to confide in others.¹⁹ She was a frequent listener and counselor to those with sorrows and perplexities. She wrote the following words of comfort to a man in Australia: “If the human agents from whom we might be led to expect help fail to do their part, let us be comforted in the thought that the heavenly intelligences will not fail to do their part. They will pass by those whose hearts are not tender and pitiful, kind and thoughtful, and ready to relieve the woes of others, and will use any human agent that will be touched with the infirmities, the necessities, the troubles, the perplexities, of people for whom Christ died.”²⁰ A review of her many statements on the role

of human counselors show that Ellen White remained confident that Jesus was the ultimate helper and healer. Yet human counselors, whether friend, parent, pastor, physician, or psychologist, are to help the person to Jesus as the “never-failing Friend in whom we can confide all the secrets of the soul.”²¹

Mental and emotional healing, like physical healing, is a process that takes time. A reading of Ellen White’s writings reveals a remarkable degree of sensitivity to the sometimes-lengthy process psychological help requires.

Conclusion

Ellen White’s approach to therapeutic treatment of the mentally ill focused on an application of principles. She supported counseling and natural healing methods. Her sweeping rejection of drugs is based on the erroneous philosophies of healing that were current in her day and the dangerous chemicals and drugs that were used. Her statements against “psychology” and “science” are related to her opposition to mesmerism, phrenology, and the “rest cure.”

As a counselor, Ellen White had extensive interactions with people throughout her lifetime and dealt with various types of psychological dysfunction. She remained sympathetic and redemptive even when the condition was particularly objectionable. She had no formal mental health training and lived at a time when mental health science was still rudimentary. Nevertheless she was able to be remarkably effective in helping many people. She understood that emotional and mental brokenness was not cured instantly and that a person could be walking with God but still need support and guidance. She believed in the necessity of direct intervention by others who were able to counsel and guide. Though she did not write about the role of psychiatrists and psychologists, she

did write positively of the type of help that can be provided by these disciplines. We cannot precisely say what her reaction would be to the modern practice of these disciplines, but a study of her life, writings, and activities suggests that she would be supportive of Christian psychological practice that was in harmony with a biblical philosophy of healing.

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Can faith and science be divorced?

by Gary B. Swanson

A layman argues that science got its roots and flourished in the soil of Christian thought, and that there's much in common between the two

In the first segment of *The Triangle*, a three-part made-for-TV miniseries about the so-called Bermuda Triangle, a character asks an engineer with four post-graduate degrees, “Why does it always seem the more education a person has, the more unwilling they are to accept new ideas?”

Notwithstanding the poor grammar – and at the risk of sounding anti-intellectual – he has a point. In a later exchange, after a discussion has ensued about the causes of unexplained phenomena, the same character observes, “Everyone uses *supernatural* like it's a dirty word!”

What he is talking about is the conflict that has arisen between those of faith and those who have elected themselves as spokespersons for science.

In recent times, some outspoken proponents of evolution, for example, have become increasingly aggressive in their denunciation of religion. The in-your-face arguments of many thinkers and writers who seek to represent science have at times taken on all the characteristics of intellectual trash-talk.

Richard Dawkins contemptuously – and publicly – describes the religious as “dyed-in-the-wool faith-heads [who are] immune to argument.”¹ Christopher Hitchens titles one of his books *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*. Sam Harris levels criticism at *all* faiths – Christian, Muslim, Jewish, even Mormon – and asserts: “It's time we

expose the religions of this world as the fakes they are and their founders as the liars and opportunists they were.”²

But science, however it is represented today, has not always been at odds with religion. In fact, in the Western tradition, science got its start from the Christian search for a greater understanding of God.

“Science took root and flourished in the soil of Christian thought,” says Alvin Plantinga. “It was nourished by the Christian idea that both we and our world were created by the same personal God, the same living God, the same conscious being with intellect, understanding, and reason. And not only were we created by God, we were created in His image. And a most important part of the divine image in us is our ability to resemble God in having knowledge, knowledge of our world around us, knowledge of ourselves, knowledge, even, of God Himself.”³

Out of this kind of thinking arose the beginnings of what we in the West today call science. It was originally a tool that was intended to bring us closer to our Creator by focusing on and learning more about ourselves and the world we live in.

Scripture, of course, presupposes God's existence. Without a belief in God, the study of the Bible is no more than an intellectual exercise in literary scholarship.

But the Bible even asserts God's temporal *pre-existence*: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word

was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:1-3, NKJV).

An artist must exist before she touches her brush to the canvas. A musician must exist before he creates a cantata. To create the world, God had to exist before its creation.

And humankind can learn more about God through His creation. The psalmist sang, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world” (Psalm 19:1-4, NIV).

To which the Apostle Paul added: “Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse” (Romans 1:20, NIV).

God created humankind with the capacity to learn ever more about Him through the ways in which He reveals Himself, one of the most remarkable of which is His creation, the natural world.

Ellen White asserts that “nature is full of lessons of the love of God. Rightly understood, these lessons lead to the Creator. They point from nature to nature's God, teach-

ing those simple, holy truths which cleanse the mind, bringing it into close touch with God. These lessons emphasize the truth that science and religion cannot be divorced.⁴ Elsewhere, she writes of what she calls “the harmony of science and Bible religion.”⁵

Yet, most of those who claim to represent science today have indeed sued for separation from faith. They have, in fact, even sought to prevent those of faith from expressing themselves in the open discourse of learning. This is much like demanding a divorce ... and a gag order.

The Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, a consortium of scientists and environmentalists, for example, have protested the U.S. National Park Service’s persistence in offering for sale a Creationist account of the Grand Canyon’s formation in the visitors’ center there. This consortium bills itself as “assisting federal and state public employees ... to work as ‘anonymous activists’ so that agencies must confront the message, rather than the messenger.”⁶ This group demands that the public must be protected from the message that there is an alternative to science’s explanation for the formation of the Grand Canyon.

Curiously, in the historical battle between faith and science, the two have reversed roles. The Inquisition of the Dark Ages is a matter of sound, well-documented historical fact, and those who questioned the orthodoxies of faith were dealt with in cruel and inhuman ways.

But without in any way affirming the atrocious methods of the Inquisition of the church that lasted for six appalling centuries, at least it was being operated “ideally” from a concern for the eternal salvation of the heretics and of the wider society who could be negatively affected by them.

There is, however, no concern over the eternal in the scientific inquisi-

tion to which our culture is being subjected today. And with every bit as much enmity and intolerance as the Inquisition of old, those who represent science are seeking to root out what they consider to be heresy.

Proponents of evolution even become militant in their attempts to prevent any alternative explanations of origins from being represented in school curricula. “Atheist fundamentalism,” as Alister McGrath describes it,⁷ has declared all-out war on the transcendent.

Yet, on close examination, science is not truly antagonistic to faith. Neither are scientists as unanimous in their disavowal of the supernatural as some would have the public believe. To be sure, the majority, those to whom the media seem to be featuring most intently, may have denied belief in the existence of God, but this position is by no means undisputed.

Research by Rice University sociologist of religion Elaine Howard Ecklund reported in 2005 that only 41 percent of biologists and 27 percent of political scientists declare disbelief in God.⁸ Though, of course, the remaining majority would include agnostics and an array of beliefs in the transcendent, atheism is clearly not universal in science.

In October 1992, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration embarked upon a 10-year search for extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI). Before that, there had been 50 such attempts by various scientific groups since 1960. When NASA became involved, however, utilizing a worldwide array of massive radio-telescopes, it provided 10,000 more frequencies at 300 times the sensitivity of previous such attempts.

Essentially, the SETI project sent out to the cosmos the message: “Is there anybody out there?” And then it listened for documented answers. It all sounds very much like science fiction. Science it is; fiction it isn’t.

Interestingly, however, the search for extraterrestrial intelligence is at the center of the plot of Carl Sagan’s science fiction book *Contact*, which was made into a film in 1997. Among other provocative themes, the film version explores the relationship between faith and science.

Central character Dr. Ellie Arrington, a lead researcher in a SETI-like project and ardent believer in the religion that science has become, is transported in a scientific research experiment somewhere far distant in the cosmos. There she communicates extensively with other beings in a world that has been constructed to simulate Earth so she will be made to feel comfortable. When she returns to Earth, however, according to the scientific instrumentation that has recorded the data from the experiment, she has been gone only a matter of seconds. The data show clearly that she has not had nearly enough time to account for her experience as she describes it. So, ironically, Dr. Arrington, a fervent believer in science, now finds herself testifying before a kind of inquisition, in which she is trying to defend her personal experience, even though it flies in the face of what appears in the instrumentation.

The panel before which Dr. Arrington is interrogated ultimately rejects her “Damascus road” experience because there is no empirical evidence for it other than her word, but the film leaves wide open the idea of the transcendent.

The gulf that isn’t

At the end of the day, the gulf between faith and reason isn’t between religion and science. True scientists will admit that their basis for belief can no more be proven than that of believers in the transcendent. It is just that the majority of the most influential self-appointed spokespersons for science in today’s culture believe in naturalism: the idea that

all phenomena can be explained by natural (as opposed to supernatural) causes. The word *believe* is used here because they cannot prove naturalism scientifically. They have faith that it is true.

Alvin Plantinga reminds us that “naturalism and evolution *together* really undermine science ... because their combination makes it impossible to see how there could arise human beings like us who have a real capacity to understand the world around us in a deep and profound way. Naturalism and evolution together make that impossible to understand.”⁹

Those who believe in the inspiration and validity of Scripture as a revelation of God’s character will see their belief confirmed in their observations of nature. In the shimmering glow of the northern lights, the delicate fragrance of a gardenia, the cheering trill of a meadowlark, the astonishing workings of the human body, they can perceive the unmistakable intent of a loving God.

“But the Bible passages take us a step further. They also suggest that the *nonbeliever*, by looking at nature, will somehow catch a glimpse of a divine Power that designed and made all that is. In today’s world many close their eyes to this aspect. They have imbibed evolutionary thinking and want to explain all that exists in terms of

chance and necessity. But, increasingly, scholars are admitting that there is so much evidence of intelligent design that this can be ignored only by those who stubbornly close their eyes to it.”¹⁰

More and more, world-renowned scientists and philosophers are opening their minds to the possibility, at least, that science and philosophy need not be mutually exclusive of religion. In 2004, an Associated Press article reported: “A British philosophy professor who has been a leading champion of atheism for more than a half century has changed his mind.”¹¹ The story goes on to account Anthony Flew’s newly-stated belief that scientific evidence has to allow for more than mere materialist answers.

True science isn’t God’s enemy. He initiated it as a valid, affirming means of revealing Himself to us. To the true scientist, *supernatural* isn’t a dirty word. Nor has the divorce of faith and science ever been consummated.

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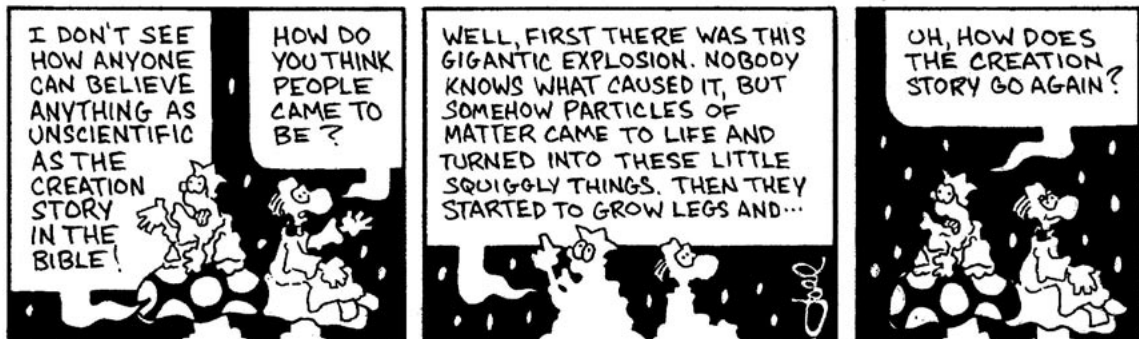
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Ponius' Puddle



PROFILE



Francisco Badilla Briones

Dialogue with a Chilean Seventh-day Adventist artist and aesthetic philosopher

Interview by Ruben Sanchez-Sabaté

He speaks without words. He caresses without hands. He inquires without questions. He is a painter: his paintings are able to trigger in the viewer a combination of ideas, feelings, and emotions. In short, he touches our spirit. He is Francisco Badilla Briones, a Chilean painter whose art concretizes the gospel message in an aesthetically contemporary language.

Born in 1974 in the southern region of Chile, Sanchez began using the brush when he was just a boy. Later as a college student, he completed a two-year basic course in arts in the Catholic University in Temuco, Chile, and then obtained a teaching degree in visual arts. Later he completed a licentiate degree in fine arts with concentration in painting. His thesis was on the symbol of the Cross in art throughout history.

Badilla's efforts to capture spirituality in his work has given him ample recognition and many awards. He has also been able to paint two murals in educational institutions in Chile and got extensive media coverage of his exhibitions. One of his exhibitions, called *Permanence*, motivated a long article in the cultural magazine *Kimelchen*, which depicted Badilla as an artist able to create both figurative and abstract paintings, and whose work, inspired by Jesus Christ, expresses his spiritual musings.

Currently, Badilla teaches paint-

ing in the Armando Dufey Blanc Art School in Temuco, works on commissioned paintings, and is involved in illustrating a poetry book. He is also preparing to paint a 40-foot-long mural for the main Seventh-day Adventist church in his hometown and has just established a Web site (<http://www.franciscobadilla.com>) where anyone can get to know more about his work.

■ *Why did you choose painting when both the Protestant tradition and the Seventh-day Adventist culture generally prefer music and hardly ever promote painting as an aesthetic language through which one can relate to God?*

I started drawing when I was a kid – as early as 4. I went through various topics that I liked as a child, from soldiers and armies to animals, musicians, sports, etc. I used to spend most of my day drawing and painting. At that time I was not a Seventh-day Adventist, but when I got to know Adventism as a teenager, I developed an artistic taste for drawing and painting. It is true that the Adventist tradition thinks music is really important in worship, but I think God can use our different talents when we offer them to Him and decide to place them under His guidance. As I see it, painting can be a channel through which I can express my questions and my visions regarding God.

As far as the Adventist bias that looks at music as being close to God and painting as distant from Him, may I say that God Himself is the great painter – just look at the beauty, richness, and variety in creation.

■ *You wrote a thesis for the licentiate degree on the connection between Puritanism and painting. What did you find?*

Puritans generally considered images sinful. Puritan art is defined as aniconic purism, since for them images were of an impure nature. Luther's Reformation also labeled as heresy all those images representing the death of Jesus. So the countries that accepted the Reformation had an art form without any representation of either saints or virgins, or even Jesus. Art focused on landscapes, traditional scenery, objects, still life, etc. The artists had to paint just what their eyes were able to see; they were not to fantasize with images that might corrupt their souls and minds. Later on, in those countries, new modern artistic styles appeared that were linked to the mind and the spirit rather than to feelings and sensuality, as it is the case with abstract, minimalist, or concept art. That is one reason why I suggest in my thesis using a combination of several elements in order to create visual metonymies which may symbolize the death of Christ.

■ *But in your paintings we can also witness open representations of Jesus.*

That is correct. Within the Adventist culture, to deal with sensuality is rather complicated. As an "Adventist artist," I question the Protestant iconography, but I wish to explore its limits and find a contemporary pictorial language. This goal has made me picture the passion of Jesus in paintings where I just make use of paint, and then I add objects such as beams, nails, and thorns, among others, which may

somehow relate us to that event. On the other hand, I must say the social state of affairs in South and Central America have been also a source of inspiration for me. I have been able to transform events of simple life in metaphors of biblical ideas as they are reflected in my paintings *The Sower* and *Sorting*. These paintings are figurative and show my transition from the abstract to realism.

■ *Who has influenced you as an artist? How would you define yourself?*

In contemporary religious art, I like the work of George Rouault; who is a French expressionist, and of William Congdon, who is an American abstract expressionist. Both of them developed a Christian art of strong codes and violent traces and environments. In these artists, the Christian message is pictured clearly, honestly, and beautifully. I love abstraction but I also like figurative art and texture. My work is a combination of abstraction, texture, and shapes. I cannot place myself in a single contemporary artistic trend.

■ *Where would you like to have your paintings exhibited?*

In any place where they can convey a message about God, where they may be able to reach an inquiring audience. I would also like to reach the art gallery or museum audiences, of course, and in recognizable places where I may be able to show my paintings in a way that their exhibition enhances the dimension of those places, such as schools, universities, and churches.

■ *Do you think it appropriate for our churches to display works of art?*

Why not? But we must be selective. Not every work of art leads to worship of God. Also we must strive to find arts that reflects technical, expressive, and symbolic quality. Art must be a language that communicates Christian content. In ancient

times, images were considered "the letters of the illiterate," but now it has to be symbolic, contemporary, poetic, and able to enhance the senses towards the knowledge of God.

We need to develop art that may be a channel to share Christ's message. I think our church lacks education in visual arts and, consequently, in aesthetic appreciation. That is why, if churches had contemporary works of art, these would be a means of visual education. What is more important, they could become an aesthetic experience reinforcing the joy of worshipping God.

■ *Tell us about your creative process. How do you feel you are inspired to do a painting?*

Inspiration is not something that comes along, but something that must be sought for. I feel inspired by God when I look for it and manage to reflect on ideas about Jesus. Sometimes, I draw some sketches and write some ideas and reflections regarding the Word of God. Thus I give start to a creative process, which often ends in a new painting. Being an artist is being humble; it means to let God use us as an instrument in His work. I like to think of myself as a channel in the aesthetic expression of His message.

■ *Let us talk about some of your works. In your work Space and Time I can see the incarnation (see <http://www.franciscobadilla.com/imagenes/espacioytiempo.jpg>).*

That is correct; it is a symbol of Christ. It represents Christ in His bodily form and in His role of mediator between God and humans. Hegel said that art is an intermediary between matter and idea, and in my willingness to explore that definition, I have created a painting of much "carnality," but at the same time abstract and symbolic.

■ *How can art help us to transcend*

space and time limitations so as to have a glimpse of concepts that solely belong to God, such as the eternal, the all-knowing, all-powerful, and omnipresent?

By appreciating art and by meditating and entering into a dialogue with a work of art. In order for this to happen, an aesthetic experience is needed – visual in this case – which may allow us to rejoice in God. In symbolic and polysemic languages, art opens up our perception toward a better knowledge of God. When we listen to a piece of church music we enjoy the perception that its message was composed to praise and worship God. The same thing should happen with visual arts.

■ *Why have you divided the painting in two spheres?*

The painting prepared as a diptych represents two different events in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. The small format in the right side of the painting is death, with colors symbolizing carnality and blood. The one on the left symbolizes Christ's resurrection, where the white space is heaven, which opens to receive its victorious king – thanks to Christ's sacrifice – so that we can have access to God. The use of tactile textures reinforces the syntax toward a meaning of Christ's bodily nature, something contended by iconoclasts. This time, however, these two theophanies are expressed without images.

■ *In reference to your painting Jesus, what meaning does the crucified Jesus have in our postmodern society? (<http://www.franciscobadilla.com/imagenes/jesus.jpg>)*

For our postmodern society, Jesus is just history: a historical and relevant event that gave origin to Christian thought. I think that our society does not want to see Jesus on the cross, or in any other way. To a certain extent, it is uncomfortable for

them, even though society actually needs Him.

■ *Don't you think that Jesus is too Catholic and too Western? Are you influenced by the fact that you studied in a Catholic school?*

The point is we do not have Protestant iconography. Therefore, it is natural that an image of Jesus' crucifixion refers us to Catholic paintings.

■ *What I see is that your Jesus, unlike others, transmits a lot of peace. In order to paint that peace, is it essential to feel it in the first place?*

Well, as a painter, I have to be at peace, but at the same time I need to be restless, feeling the need for God. In order to paint Christ, it is important to feel that peace which allows for making decisions in painting, trusting God to guide my work so that it can reach and touch the hearts of viewers.

■ *In your work Symbol and Reality, where is the symbol and where is the reality? (<http://www.franciscobadilla.com/imagenes/simboloyrealidad.jpg>)*

In this polyptic, symbol and reality are intertwined. The Cross is a symbol that is not represented in a conventional way but as the image of a man carrying a beam; that is to say, the Cross is a symbol, but it is also a reality in the here and now for each one of us. When we think of Calvary, we must see our reality.

The formats at the right symbolize the Trinity: God the Father above, Jesus in the center, and the Holy Spirit below. For the reality to sink in to us, it depends on how we relate to the power and grace of Trinity.

■ *How does symbolism contribute to our perception of reality?*

A symbol gives us identity. It refers us to what we are; it points to the Christ who died for our sins, and that should be enough to show us

what our reality is. We must come to a place where we can decode the symbol of the Cross in our everyday lives, so as to enlarge our perception of reality as God's children in need of Him.

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PROFILE



Cynthia Prime

An Adventist businesswoman with a heart for HIV/AIDS orphans in Swaziland

Interview by Heide Ford

Energetic and fun-loving, Cynthia Prime is a visionary with a reach for the new and the challenging. She is as much at ease with the rich and glamorous as she is hugging AIDS orphans. Born in Trinidad, Cynthia dreamed of becoming a physician, caring for the sick in some remote, forgotten part of the world. After graduating from high school, she moved to New York to begin a nursing program on a track toward becoming a doctor. But her dream ended quickly when she couldn't stomach the sight of blood and identified too intensely with patients' pain.

Instead, Cynthia completed an undergraduate degree in English and a graduate degree in radio and TV. Over the years, she worked for a community newspaper, as a reporter, in public relations, and as an executive career-management consultant.

After she married Philip Prime, a chemist, the couple moved to Indianapolis and raised three children – one daughter and two adopted high-risk teen sons. Active in her home church, Cynthia found her joy in youth outreach and in women's ministry and lent her voice for the voiceless. For nearly 10 years, she presented seminars empowering battered women and teen girls and hosted conferences addressing domestic violence. She founded one of the first shelters for battered Adventist women in the Lake Union Conference.

After several years of a successful career as a management consultant, Cynthia, with her husband, founded a fragrance company whose products are featured by renowned retailers such as

New York's Bergdorf Goodman and London's Harrods.

More recently, Cynthia's passion for the less fortunate has taken her to Africa to work among HIV/AIDS orphans. Together with Linda Schultz, her ministry partner, Cynthia is directing Seeds of Hope Outreach, a non-profit organization dedicated to sowing hope, growing dreams and changing the future of orphans and vulnerable children and women.

■ *Did you ever wonder why your childhood dream was so different from your professional journey?*

I believe God created us dreamers. He prepares us as He leads us along a dream path step, by step until one day the bigger purpose for our existence unfolds and we recognize not only why we are here but also why we traveled the path we did to get there. He has a place for every gift and ability, and, given the opportunity, He will point us to it.

■ *What did you learn in the fragrance business, and how did you minister to people there?*

I've always loved fragrance. The olfactory sense is as important as the others, but greatly underestimated. While in that business, there were opportunities to meet people we ordinarily don't meet and let them see Christ in our lives. I have a dream of seeing that industry used to inspire and empower. I'd like to see it create jobs in places like sub-Saharan Africa, where sex has become transactional because people have run out of options.

■ *How did you go from prestigious fragrance to poverty-stricken AIDS orphans?*

My ah-ha moment came three years ago. I was invited to be a camp meeting speaker in Swaziland, in southern Africa, with one of the highest HIV/AIDS infection rates in the world. Out of a population of one million, there are 120,000 orphans and vulnerable children (OVC).

Even before my visit, what I learned touched a sensitive chord in me, and it seemed that my childhood dream was about to be realized but in a different way. I felt called to heal hearts rather than bodies. The first time a wave of 1,000 orphans stood before me, I knew that my life would never be the same again. I gave up the security of my job and dived in head first. I learned the meaning of walking by faith, and God has shown up repeatedly to demonstrate His power. The work moves forward on the wings of prayer alone. You don't do what you do to be thanked or appreciated. You do it because there are no other options.

■ *Seeds of Hope Outreach (SOHO) was born out of a speaking invitation?*

Yes, as I planned to go to Swaziland, the ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) office there asked me to help with clothing for several thousand children. And food for one thousand, since I told them that if the orphans did not eat, neither would I. Wow! I was overwhelmed. Danny Shelton at 3ABN (Three Angels Broadcasting Network) saw me staggering under the immensity of the need and asked a question that I never forgot: "Whose work is this, Cynthia?" Danny was one of the first donors to help start this ministry, and the donations from those first broadcast interviews are what kept the work growing the first year.

■ *You feel called to heal hearts. How are you doing that?*

One thing orphans learn early in life is that they are not welcome. There is

a stigma associated with their condition that makes pain and rejection a daily reality. They suffer a lack of basic necessities like food, safe shelter, and clothing, and are easy prey to abuse.

SOHO Welcome Places are multi-purpose centers where children are fed, spiritually nurtured, and schooled, and where life skills necessary to their survival in society are taught. We foster entrepreneurship through various vocational skills training programs, such as sewing, woodwork, welding, weaving, and farming.

■ *In spite of the limitations of a small NGO, you have formed a strong network. Tell us about some of your partners.*

The Agriculture and Engineering Departments at Purdue University in Indiana have partnered, as well as the Psychology Department at Nova Southeastern University in Florida. Recently, eight doctoral students and their professor went to Swaziland and did Train-the-Trainer in crisis and suicide prevention. Some public schools are also involved.

Andrews University in Michigan has just become a partner in a 27-hectare farm that will generate food for OVCs and provide support for God's work in Swaziland, where the income levels have dropped, as so many employees have died because of AIDS. SOHO is also collaborating with Swaziland's AMICAALL (the Alliance of Mayors' Initiatives for Community Action on AIDS at the Local Level) to develop a prevention program for HIV/AIDS.

■ *We hear so much about AIDS victims. How can we avoid becoming callous to their needs?*

To begin with, we need to recognize that AIDS sufferers are not just statistics; they are people. Children, young people, who otherwise would be full of promise. Each child is the face of Christ before us. We each must use what He has given us to do the best we can. Once that commitment takes over, how can we become callous?

■ *If readers are interested in helping, how can they get involved with SOHO?*

Volunteering is a good start. We need musicians, teachers, medical personnel, sports and fitness pros, etc. Students can be advocates on their campuses by raising awareness and generating support. We don't want just donations, as badly as they are needed to keep SOHO programs going. We need people to become a voice for those who have none. Get on our Web site or give us a call at www.seedsof-hopeoutreach.org.

■ *What are your next steps?*

We have begun a special program for households headed by children, pre-teen to 17. PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) has indicated an interest in doing a documentary. This is a long way, but at the end of it, God will ask us all for the lambs who are without protection and provision because of AIDS. I pray that there will be many to present to Jesus.

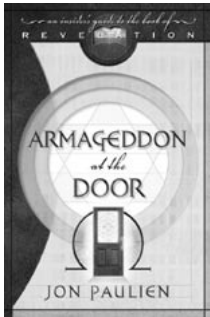
I'm also planning to publish a book to encourage people (women especially) to push the limits and venture for God. Changing the world is not the job of celebrities but of ordinary people through whom God wants to do extraordinary work.

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SOHO Web site: www.seedsof-hopeoutreach.org.

BOOKS



Armageddon at the Door
by Jon Paulien (Hagerstown, Maryland:
Autumn House, 2008. 223 pages;
paperback).

Reviewed by Ikechukwu Oluikpe

Armageddon has been a subject of much discussion in recent times, especially in light of the international military conflicts of major world powers. Such discussions, and the aroused interest in the biblical mention of Armageddon in the context of end-time events, demand a clear understanding of what Armageddon is all about.

Jon Paulien, dean of the School of Religion at Loma Linda University, a former professor of New Testament interpretation at Andrews University, and a prolific author, provides a study on the biblical view of Armageddon, investigating the significance of the term within the context of the book of Revelation and the rest of the New Testament. He does this in 12 chapters and an appendix.

In the first two chapters, the author presents an overview of wars in history and how preachers have related them to the biblical Armageddon. Many evangelists, including Adventists, have seen the implication of major wars for the Armageddon moment. The two world wars, the Cold War, and presently the war on terror (possibly leading to another world war) have been viewed by many as the beginning of Armageddon. Paulien discusses the current war on terror by presenting the defining issues that led to its beginning. He traces the origin of Al-Qaeda, the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, and explains the power tussle and negotiations between the United States and the Islamic jihadists and their implications.

Chapter two takes up both sides of the war on terror: the American side and the Jihadist (Al-Qaeda) side.

Chapters three and four describe the author's personal search for the meaning of Armageddon. Though the author presents major views of Armageddon (pp. 53, 54), he holds to the view that Armageddon is the symbolic name for the antitypical events of Mount Carmel and that this fits best with the context of Revelation 13-17 (pp. 57-60). Chapter five traces the Mount Carmel theme in Revelation 12-14 and identifies the key players involved in the conflict: the unholy trinity (pp. 62-68).

The sixth chapter analyzes the end-time role and context of the seven last plagues of Revelation 16 and creates the background for interpreting Armageddon (which is related to the sixth plague). Chapter seven deals with the exegetical challenge of interpreting certain prophetic specifics of Armageddon in Revelation 17.

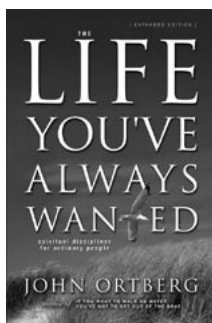
Chapters eight and nine deal with major confederacies involved in the war of Armageddon and are identified on the basis of the author's exegesis of Revelation 12-17. The final two chapters of the book enumerate the major events of Armageddon, while chapter twelve contains reflections on the implications of the study's view of Armageddon for the present time, beginning with the war on terror and concluding with basic spiritual principles that are pertinent to the reader's preparedness for what is coming.

Even though the book deals with Armageddon against the background of current discussions on historic wars, the spiritual and pastoral nature of the book must not be missed. For example, the author states that the purpose of prophecy is not to satisfy curiosity but to teach us how to live today (pp. 166, 172, 193). The author continues to stress the point that Armageddon is a struggle/battle for the mind (pp. 113-115, 118, 120, 141, 170, 193) and that God is in control of end-time events even when they seem to be getting out of hand (pp. 94, 132, 150, 167, 194-196). He also reminds us that the hard texts of Scripture make us return to study God's Word more, even though all texts are not clear and easy to understand (pp. 97, 98, 121-123, 200-202). When things are not clear, that provides opportunity for deception to play its role: hence the need for more prayer, Bible study, and watchful trust that God will take us through the final crisis.

The book simplifies the exegetical process for interpreting the Book of Revelation by providing hermeneutical principles that are easy to understand, even for lay persons. The author's use of diagrams to summarize significant points, and repetition of important links are useful tools to explain a complex topic. At the same time, the author cautions and warns against the tendency to be simplistic and to make specific predictions, speculations, and date-setting about events to come.

One criticism needs to be mentioned. While I appreciate the author's opinion and evaluation of the "Mount Megiddo (or Mount Carmel) view of Armageddon," he fails to mention the "Mount of Assembly" view, which has its merits. All said, however, Paulien's work is a valuable contribution to the study of Armageddon. The book is logically organized and exegetically sound, and will appeal to serious New Testament students as well as others who seek a biblical understanding of this important topic.

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The Life You've Always Wanted
by John Ortberg (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997; 279 pp.; hardcover).

Reviewed by Adelina Alexe

John Ortberg is a well-known author of bestsellers such as *If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat*; *Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them*; and *God Is Closer Than You Think*. Having read these books in my native language – Romanian – I have come to appreciate Ortberg's books for what they are: smart, deep, woven with information of all kinds, yet easy to comprehend and very practical for one's daily life.

Ortberg is currently the senior pastor of the Presbyterian church in Menlo Park, California. Trained as a pastor and as a psychologist, he has the gift of combining the call of theology and the practical principles of psychology to offer the reader great principles of joyful living. The author is indeed a spiritual mentor.

John Ortberg is not afraid of anything. As a good psychologist and a faithful believer, he cuts to the midst of a problem and finds a cure. Often the problems he addresses are everyday "little things" that can make a big difference to our spiritual wellness. His sense of practicality is outstanding. He gives himself as an example to illustrate his ideas. By looking at his own experience, readers are encouraged to give him credit for empathizing with them. You are comfortable because you feel like "he knows what he is talking about; he has been there." By being open with his audience, Ortberg gives us the chance to realize that he really can identify with us. We compare his growth areas with our growth areas, his challenges with our challenges, and eventually his solution with our solution, increasing thus the possibility that people can follow through on his advice.

The author's spiritual focus raises the trust level of read-

ers that they are not alone in battling personal problems: God is there, and He is the ultimate solution to all our problems. God is the greatest psychologist in the universe. Therefore, the use of proper psychological methods can add significantly to the growth process, and enrich our spiritual experience. This is what John Ortberg wants us to discover through his book, and he does it through lots of humor, fun, and deep practical applications.

The Life You've Always Wanted is an invaluable aid to spiritual growth. It ends with a study guide for further exploration of the topics discussed. I recommend the book to all who seek fulfillment in life within the context of plans that God has in store.

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Amerika: Mit Gewalt in den Gottesstaat
(*America: Theocracy by Force*) by Gerhard Padderatz (Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 2007; 335 pp., hardcover).

Reviewed by Ekkehardt Mueller

Dr. Padderatz has studied theology, history, and communication. He has worked as a pastor, professor of history and social sciences, and editor in various countries, and presently is the president of a management consulting firm with offices in Frankfurt, Zurich, and Detroit, where he lives.

His present book about America – that with determination moves toward a theocracy – is to some extent coauthored by Christian Wannemaker, who works in the field of philosophical ethics. Before 1980, Padderatz spent two years in the U.S., which he describes as a marvelous country, being especially intrigued with its freedom, openness, and tolerance. His dream to live there permanently became true in 2002.

However, he noticed that after September 11, 2001, a marked change took place in America, leading to a mix-

ture of traditional patriotism, remainders of old ideologies, and paranoid angst causing a tremendous desire for security. In addition, evangelical fundamentalism had been able to get George W. Bush into the White House. The process of change, he suggests, is not yet completed. Therefore, he felt compelled to start in-depth research of the roots and background for this change, moving beyond patriotic propaganda. Although this is a critical assessment, he makes it clear that it is not directed against Christianity or America. He appreciates both but is deeply concerned about current developments.

The book, written in German, has 336 pages and is divided into an introduction, six chapters, a conclusion, and an appendix containing 50 pages of endnotes, a bibliography, and two indices. The chapters deal with (1) trends in American society, (2) a description of the political system, (3) the development and state of Christian religions in the U.S., (4) the belief system of fundamentalists, (5) the realization of a theocracy, and (6) the Christianization of the rest of the world.

In his first chapter, Padderatz points to the frequently extreme form of patriotism in the U.S., which has religious traits and leads to an indifference regarding the rest of the world, a hero cult, and militarism. While secret services boom, justice and personal liberty suffer. Critical thinking is underdeveloped. People are degraded to con-

sumers. Their positive characteristics of openness, spontaneity, and optimism are coupled with naivety, superficiality, and mere pragmatism.

In the second chapter, the author asks these questions: Is the American public longing for a political savior and, in such a context, may dangers lurk for democracy? He discusses the stratification of society, the triumph of lobbyists, how a president gets his vote, and that, in the U.S., the idea of divine election undergirds much of what happens in society and politics, leading to what other nations regard as a kind of imperialism.

In the next chapters, Padderatz discusses the dangerous influence of religious groups and their theology on politics. Beliefs such as the view that the modern state of Israel is a fulfillment of biblical prophecy determine American relations with Israel and the Arab world. These beliefs influence, for instance, environmental concerns, the treatment of the underprivileged, and the war against terrorism. Padderatz shows how evangelicals and Catholics work together in various foundations to exert a tremendous influence on the government; lists characteristics of fundamentalists; talks about a glorification of violence, the justification of immoral behavior among Christians, and the attempt to do away with the separation of church and state; and addresses the issue of a new world order – the goal of the religious right to bring under “the rule of Christ” not only America but the entire world. However, he also points to voices speaking against these trends, such as the theologian Gregory A. Boyd.

The author concludes that it may be just a matter of time until the religious right dominates politics and the economy and forces its perceived Christian values and theological understanding on others, which may lead to persecution and oppression. He states that America has changed, betrayed its own values, and is marching back into the Medieval Ages. The danger consists in introducing religion into politics.

Due to the lack of information available to the general public, the book may at times sound like a horror story. However, the author allows respected and well-known Americans to speak out about America, and the work seems to be well-researched. It deserves a serious reading.

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Guidelines for contributors

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

The editors are interested in well-written articles, interviews, and reports consistent with *Dialogue's* objectives:

1. To nurture an intelligent, living faith.
2. To deepen commitment to Christ, the Bible, and Adventist global mission.
3. To articulate a biblical approach to contemporary issues.
4. To offer ideas and models of Christian service and outreach.

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

Check our Web site:

<http://dialogue.adventist.org>.

FIRST PERSON

My Brook Cherith: When life dries up on you

by Sally Lam-Phoon

When your brook appears to have dried up, when you think you're abandoned, stop asking why. Stay tuned to God.

"And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up" (1 Kings 7:7, KJV).

Like Elijah, I had my Brook Cherith – all mine.

I had spent a significant portion of my life at Southeast Asia Union College (SAUC) in Singapore. Although a small school, it had a deep impact on my life when, as a young adult, I came to its portals as a student in 1968. For the very first time, I savoured and drank deep from the fountains of Adventist education. Like the Brook Cherith, it nourished my soul, nurtured my thinking and transformed my very being, defining for me the call the Lord had given while I was a youth member of our home church in Penang, Malaysia.

With great joy I graduated at the end of 1971 together with my boyfriend. We went home to a pre-arranged wedding ceremony. As part of our honeymoon, we flew over to Kuching on the island of Borneo – and there we had our first taste of mission service at Sunny Hill School. SAUC had prepared us well, and we did our very best. Seven years later, we received a call to return to Singapore, and we were thrilled at the opportu-

nity to serve as teachers at our alma mater.

But first came an intensive one-and-one-half years in the Philippines, where we received our Master's degrees. When we returned to SAUC in 1980, the college was struggling with issues of recognition so that our graduates could hold a degree that would open doors to employment opportunities outside the church.

A new journey opened before us as we pooled our efforts in working toward an affiliation arrangement with Walla Walla College in the United States. After heaps of paperwork and exchange visits, the affiliation was signed and sealed in 1984, leading to better quality assurance for all. This relationship with Walla Walla College increased enrollement gradually as recruitment efforts intensified. In the mid 1990s, enrollement peaked at 201, an increase of 43 per cent over the 1980 figure.

However, as the educational environment in Singapore evolved and provided keen competition, SAUC's student numbers soon plateaued. The college's location in a country with a high cost of living meant that the neighboring countries of Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia could not be served. Besides, the political situation made it almost impossible for students from these three countries to obtain visas for studying in Singapore.

A small college has its many threats and challenges, but we had the assurance like Elijah by the Brook Cherith. It wasn't the most comfortable of situations, nor the most prosperous

of times, but we had a mission to fulfill. We saw how the Lord brought the students to us. Miracles along the way assured us of His providence and constant care. As a faculty, we worked hard and enjoyed the fruit of our labor – every year, graduation was a high point as we charged our graduates who had been with us for four or five years to go out and make a difference wherever they are.

Yes, God supplied abundantly: "the ravens" showed up at the opportune time; our water from the brook seemed sure. It was not a gushing river but a trickling brook that sustained us from year to year.

The brook may dry up ...

Then, very abruptly, the brook dried up. The date will remain etched in our memories, never to be forgotten because it happened so dramatically right on my husband's birthday – March 4, 1996. For some time, we had known about the government's acquisition of land along the stretch of road where the college was located, and a friend had gone down to the Land Office to secure more details. As he looked at the map, he realized that the college land was set for acquisition. What a birthday "gift" for my husband (who was the president of the college at the time), as this news was conveyed to him over the phone. It was like a bolt of lightning coursing through our nerves. Frantically, we consulted and consulted, but the bottom line was clear as day. We had to close or relocate; it was too expensive to move and rebuild the college in Singapore, based on the options offered us by the government.

Yes, we had to admit that the brook had dried up; it was time to move on. Establishing a Transitional Plans Committee to study the relocation of the college took first priority, since the union felt the need to maintain an institution of higher education for its territory. Plans kicked in to take care of every student, clean up the files,

and prepare to archive them while creating a system whereby students could still access their transcripts despite the fact that SAUC was no longer in existence in Singapore.

At first it was hard to rejoice in a situation like this. Tears flowed freely; we mourned, we grieved as it became crystal clear that there was no way to continue as we used to. Our comfort zone lay shattered – the future looked uncertain. No one could predict the outcomes, yet we had to bravely carry on. But with each step taken during those two trying years, the future became clearer. By the end of 1998, we graduated our last group of graduates, and SAUC officially moved to Thailand to merge with another small Thai institution, called Mission College.

We had to face the fact that Cheriths don't last forever – whether it is a job, an institution, a special friend, or even a bank account. As with Elijah, all of his security vanished in a day's time. When that happened, Elijah did not cry or pout. God told Elijah to go to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there with a widow who would supply him with food (I Kings 17:8, 9), and Elijah went. Simple obedience; no questions asked. Perhaps he was anticipating something better around the corner. He was no longer alone; a widow would be there to care for him – someone to talk to rather than talking to the birds!

Consider what might have happened if Elijah had stubbornly stayed in the same spot and refused to move from the brook. He would have died. For sure, the widow of Zarephath and her son would have starved to death. Baal worship would have flourished even more without the Mount Carmel experience. But because Elijah was willing to move on, I Kings 18 records the triumph of God over Baal on Mount Carmel.

In my case, I had grown so attached to my Cherith that I was comfortable and happy; perhaps too comfortable

and too happy that my Cherith meant more to me than what God wanted to do with my life. In retrospect, the Lord was alerting me to the fact that He had a new mission for me to accomplish.

But God has a plan

When your brook appears to have dried up, when you think that you're abandoned, stop asking why, stop blaming God, stop looking for an easy way out. Cry if you must, but cry out to God, and cling to His promises that all things will work together for good. Thank God for the memories and the beautiful times you have had by your Cherith. Then let go of your "brook."

Pray earnestly for the mind of Christ to envision fresh perspectives ahead so you can see where He wants to lead you next. Keep your hand firmly in the hand of God as you move forward in trust and faith. He has promised that His Word will be a lamp to show the way in the deepest darkness. Read that Word every day, delight in its promises, and He will lead you one step at a time, not more, not less, in newly forged paths that He has gone ahead to prepare for you. These paths will take you to still waters, and safer pastures where your soul will be restored and where you will eventually agree that He has given you "far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams!" (Ephesians 3:20, *The Message*).

Yes, my experience by the Brook Cherith was part of a God-ordained plan. In retrospect, I can see how the pieces have fallen in place like a jigsaw puzzle. A beautiful picture has emerged. He has brought me to places I never dreamed I would go, and enabled me to carry responsibilities I never thought possible. The Lord worked it all out according to His purpose.

After the move in 1998, Mission College was in a much better posi-

tion to serve every country in the union territory. Students from Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia could afford to pursue their studies in Thailand. The merged college grew by leaps and bounds. Today, some 10 years later, it is about to receive university status by the country and has an enrollment of about a thousand students from more than 30 countries around the world who are taught by an international faculty.

So when your Cherith dries up on you, when all seems lost, take heart because in the spiritual realm, the end of one story is simply the beginning of another – an experience that will bring you closer to God. If we put God first and last, we will be able to say with assurance, "The best is yet to come." Just trust that God always has our best interests at heart and His guidance is always the safest. Ellen White states so beautifully: "Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service and honor of God supreme will find perplexities vanish, and a plain path before their feet."*

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* Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1940), p. 330.

LOGOS

Our lives, our work: What kind of influence do we exert?

by Halvard B. Thomsen

“David left there [Gath] and escaped to the cave of Adullam; when his brothers and all his father’s house heard of it, they went down there to him. Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him; and he became captain over them.

“Those who were with him numbered about four hundred” (1 Samuel 22:1, 2).¹

My earliest memory of any discussion of this passage is in the context of church planting. I was a young theology student when a group of members from a church my father had recently pastored formed a new church in a town a few miles away. My father referred to the new congregation as an “Adullam’s cave.” He explained this appellation by describing the attitudes and circumstances of many of the founding members.

In the past, it was more common for new churches to start from a congregational split. Every time I heard about such a church plant, I would be reminded of my father’s words and Adullam’s cave. Early this year I read comments on this verse by leadership expert John Maxwell. He stimulated my thinking.

After slaying Goliath, David was invited into Saul’s palace, where he learned a great deal about ruling the kingdom of Israel, including the art of warfare. Unfortunately, Saul’s jealousy forced David into exile. It is at this point in David’s life that we

pick up the story in this passage. Try to imagine the people who gathered around David: everyone who was in distress; everyone in debt; everyone discontented. Or in the words of David himself: “I lie down among lions that greedily devour human prey; their teeth are spears and arrows, their tongues sharp swords” (Psalm 57:4).

What was David to do with these people? Are these the kind of people who were to resist King Saul?

Was this the group with whom David was to launch a revolution? What kind of leaders – or warriors – would the discontented and distressed make?

David tells how he related to his circumstances: “My heart is steadfast, O God, ... I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations. For your steadfast love is as high as the heavens; your faithfulness extends to the clouds” (Psalm 57:7-10).

What happens to the discontented?

As we live in David’s sandals, note what became of his distressed and discontented followers. “David inquired of the Lord, ‘Shall I go and attack these Philistines?’ The Lord said to David, ‘Go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah.’ But David’s men said to him, ‘Look, we are afraid here in Judah; how much more then if we go to Keilah against

the armies of the Philistines?’ Then David inquired of the Lord again. The Lord answered him, ‘Yes, go down to Keilah; for I will give the Philistines into your hand.’ So David and his men went to Keilah, fought with the Philistines, brought away their livestock, and dealt them a heavy defeat. Thus David rescued the inhabitants of Keilah” (1 Samuel 23:1-5).

The strength and valor of those who followed David to Adullam’s cave continued. They kept conquering the nations of Canaan, annihilating the Geshurites, Gezrites and the Amalekites.

They were also successful in eluding King Saul. “David remained in the strongholds in the wilderness, in the hill country of the Wilderness of Ziph. Saul sought him every day, but the Lord did not give him into his hand” (1 Samuel 23:14).

As the story unfolds, David’s group increases from 400 to 600 people (1 Samuel 23:13).

When David escaped to the cave, he attracted the distressed and discontented. But by modeling dependence on God, he transformed his men into effective warriors – and leaders. When David ascended the throne they were prepared to take on leadership for the nation.

Two questions

David’s experience confronts us with two questions: what kind of people do we attract? What happens

to those people because of their association with us?

Look over your life. Think about the people who gravitate to you as friends, associates, or followers. What kind of people are they? Are they visionaries and achievers? Or are they grumblers and complainers? Have you noticed that people tend to judge us not only by the friends we choose, but also by the people we attract as colleagues, or choose for employees?

Implicit in this first question is another: What kind of people are we? We will never attract the optimistic if we are gloomy and pessimistic; we will never attract the visionary if we see no hope; we will never capture the imagination and enthusiasm of people around us if we ignore opportunities and focus on problems.

Then there's the second question: what happens to people who associate with us? Our parents always told us to be careful when picking our friends because of the influence they can have on us, but this story also challenges us to think about how we influence people. As we see from David's example, even the distressed and discontented need not remain in their discontent! It is in our power to influence them. Sometimes I wonder if we give too little regard

to the influence of association. If, as is suggested by the apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 3:18), we become like the things we admire, then certainly we will influence those who look up to us!

"If we gather not with Christ we scatter abroad. We all have an influence, and that influence is telling upon the destiny of others for their present and future good or for their eternal loss."²

"Every act of our lives affects others for good or evil. Our influence is tending upward or downward; it is felt, acted upon, and to a greater or less degree reproduced by others. If by our example we aid others in the development of good principles, we give them power to do good. In their turn they exert the same beneficial influence upon others, and thus hundreds and thousands are affected by our unconscious influence."³

Are our optimism, vision, imagination and faith contagious? Do people who associate with us become more dependent on the Lord Jesus, or more forgetful of His claims on us? Are they more at rest in His goodness and grace? Are they more determined to do His bidding? Are they more eager to build His kingdom?

"You may never know the result of

your influence from day to day, but be sure that it is exerted for good or evil. ...Throw a pebble into the lake and a wave is formed, and another and another; and as they increase, the circle widens until they reach the very shore. Thus our influence, though apparently insignificant, may continue to extend far beyond our knowledge or control."⁴

What kind of people do we attract? What happens to those people because of their association with us?

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59th General Conference Session: Proclaiming God's Grace

June 23-July 3, 2010 • Atlanta, Georgia, USA • www.gcsession.org

Mark your calendar to pray for (and attend if you can) the 59th Session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, from June 23-July 3, 2010. Every five years the Seventh-day Adventist Church meets to strengthen itself for mission, conduct Church business and enact policy, elect its president and other leaders, worship,

and celebrate together. The 59th session will be representative of the more than 25 million-strong Adventists from around the globe, and will meet under a theme of "Proclaiming God's Grace." Daily attendance at the event is expected to average more than 35,000 people; on the two weekends, more than 70,000 are expected to attend.

"Grace is a powerful, living force; it changes and animates us," says General Conference president Dr. Jan Paulsen. "When God's grace reaches into our lives – and into the life of our church – it's impossible to go on with business as usual. It opens our eyes to needs around us; it compels us to go into our communities. By focusing on this theme, we're acknowledging that the experience of grace is absolutely central in the life of each believer, and we're asking: 'How can we as Seventh-day Adventists reflect more clearly its depth, breadth, and transforming power?'"

ACTION REPORT



Adventist students gather in Argentina

by Rocío Mendoza and Iván Escobar

“Searching for His Will” was the theme that brought approximately 100 university students and friends to the seventh University Congress of the Asociación Argentina del Norte, September 19-21, 2008, in the city of Jardín América. Packed with spiritual retreat, intellectual reflection, and social networking, the event was organized by the Adventist University Center of Posadas and was supported by the Northern Argentine Conference.

The theme, under the scriptural exposition of Pastor Darío Caviglione, challenged the students to experience personally the power of constant prayer and daily study of the Word of God. “There’s no other way,” we all learned.

The Sabbath as usual was a high day, providing us with three wonderful seminars. Edgar Beskow, a licensed psychologist, spoke about several of the

problems that young people are struggling with in contemporary culture, such as excessive care of the body, the empty state of being, and other aspects that question the meaning of existence and faith. A second seminar featured Professor Carlos Steger, who provided Adventist students with significant tools to deal with the continuous challenge of “creation vs. evolution.” He not only shared his knowledge and expertise, but also provided significant examples that prove the existence of God, the Creator. The final seminar dealt with the very reason for being Adventist on a university campus: “Evangelism in the Universities.”

Pastor Oscar Tapia motivated, outlined, and challenged the students to be witnesses for Christ not only with their peers, but also with their professors and staff members. Students were given the opportunity to create their own evangelistic frameworks to carry

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!

out in their study environments.

Not only was the congress a success because it served as a testimony of our faith to the university officials in charge of the meeting place, but also because it was a blessing for the students as they shared the company of good friends, their expertise from different milieus, and above all their personal experience of living in peace with God.

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OPEN FORUM

Work out your salvation?

by John M. Fowler

What does it mean when Paul says, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12)?¹ How is it possible to be saved by works, even though Paul says in many places that salvation is by faith alone?

One of the essentials of biblical interpretation is to read a passage in its context. The immediate context of this passage is Paul’s desire that the Philippian Christians should lead a life “worthy of the gospel of Christ” (1:27). Such a saved life should put away self-centeredness (2:2) and reflect the mind of Jesus (2:5) in everything that is done, even to the point of death. Paul’s admonition is couched in strong words: don’t take your salvation for granted. Take its demand on your life seriously: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (2:12).

We must not stop reading here. Paul’s admonition to show our salvation by our works is immediately followed by the apostle’s assurance of divine enabling: “For it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (2:13).

Is there a contradiction between the two statements – the promise and the demand, the enabling and the summoning? Is there a legalistic stance in the phrase “work out your own salvation”? Or is there an attempt to walk a theological tightrope, trying to balance the divine and the human in the process of salvation?

Perish the thought. If there was one truth that was precious to the apostle, it was the good news of salvation by grace through faith alone. Paul spent his entire ministry proclaiming that

salvation could not come by any other way except through grace, and that a sinner’s acceptance before God is not something merited, but always something gifted. The apostle even bequeathed to the Christian community two whole epistles – Romans and Galatians – devoted entirely to this good news of God’s saving grace. And to the Ephesians he wrote: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast.” (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

What, then, did the apostle mean by saying “work out your own salvation”? Paul is appealing for a life and a lifestyle consistent with the demands of faith. In effect, the apostle is saying: “Yes, you are saved by faith. You are saved by the free grace of God. But you are saved to live. Your faith experience must move from believing to living. You must live your salvation. That involves a lifestyle of obedience, just like our great model – Christ Jesus – who obeyed even to the point of humiliation and death (Phil. 2:5-13). And furthermore, your Christian walk is your personal responsibility; no one else can do it for you.”

“Work out your salvation,” therefore, does not mean “work for your salvation,” but “live a life consistent with the new status of being children of God.” As Muller points out: “The believer is called to self-activity, to the active pursuit of the will of God, to the promotion of the spiritual life in himself, to the realization of the virtues of the Christian life, and to a personal application of salvation. He must ‘work out’ what God in His

grace has ‘worked in’.”²

This human responsibility is to be pursued “with fear and trembling.” Paul here is not referring to any “slavish terror”³ of a vengeful master; nor is he concerned about any frustration in the fulfillment of God’s redemptive purpose. But he is wary of self’s innate capacity for overconfidence or complacency in the journey toward the kingdom. Ellen White warns: “God does not bid you fear that He will fail to fulfill His promises, that His patience will weary, or His compassion be found wanting. Fear lest your will shall not be held in subjection to Christ’s will, lest your hereditary and cultivated traits of character shall control your life.... Fear lest self shall interpose between your soul and the great Master Worker. Fear lest self-will shall mar the high purpose that through you God desires to accomplish. Fear to trust your own strength, fear to withdraw your hand from the hand of Christ and attempt to walk life’s pathway without His abiding presence.”⁴

In that sense, fear and trembling must accompany the Christian walk, but in no way is there any implication that the journey is to be performed by self alone. “For it is God who is at work in you.” The word for “at work” is *energeo*. God is energizing you. God is empowering you. He who has begun a “good work in you” (Philippians 1:6) is now enabling you to finish that work.

This emphasis on God’s work in the life of a Christian (1 Corinthians 12:6, 11; Galatians 2:8; Ephesians 1:11, 20) gives us the assurance that the con-

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Faith and Acceptance

From *Steps to Christ*, chapter 6

by Ellen G. White

As your conscience has been quickened by the Holy Spirit, you have seen something of the evil of sin, of its power, its guilt, its woe; and you look upon it with abhorrence. You feel that sin has separated you from God, that you are in bondage to the power of evil. The more you struggle to escape, the more you realize your helplessness. Your motives are impure; your heart is unclean. You see that your life has been filled with selfishness and sin. You long to be forgiven, to be cleansed, to be set free. Harmony with God, likeness to Him – what can you do to obtain it?

It is peace that you need – Heaven's forgiveness and peace and love in the soul. Money cannot buy it, intellect cannot procure it, wisdom cannot attain to it; you can never hope, by your own efforts, to secure it. But God offers it to you as a gift, "without money and without price." Isaiah 55:1. It is yours if you will but reach out your hand and grasp it. The Lord says, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isaiah 1:18. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." Ezekiel 36:26.

You have confessed your sins, and in heart put them away. You have resolved to give yourself to God. Now go to Him, and ask that He will wash away your sins and give you a new heart. Then believe that He does this because He has promised. This is the lesson which Jesus taught while He was on earth, that the gift which God promises us, we must believe we do receive, and it is ours. Jesus healed the people of their diseases when they had faith in His power; He helped them in the things which they could see, thus inspiring them with confidence in Him concerning things which they could not see – leading them to believe in His power to forgive sins. This He plainly stated in the healing of the man

sick with palsy: "That ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith He to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." Matthew 9:6. So also John the evangelist says, speaking of the miracles of Christ, "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name." John 20:31.

From the simple Bible account of how Jesus healed the sick, we may learn something about how to believe in Him for the forgiveness of sins. Let us turn to the story of the paralytic at Bethesda. The poor sufferer was helpless; he had not used his limbs for thirty-eight years. Yet Jesus bade him, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." The sick man might have said, "Lord, if Thou wilt make me whole, I will obey Thy word." But, no, he believed Christ's word, believed that he was made whole, and he made the effort at once; he willed to walk, and he did walk. He acted on the word of Christ, and God gave the power. He was made whole.

In like manner you are a sinner. You cannot atone for your past sins; you cannot change your heart and make yourself holy. But God promises to do all this for you through Christ. You believe that promise. You confess your sins and give yourself to God. You will to serve Him. Just as surely as you do this, God will fulfill His word to you. If you believe the promise – believe that you are forgiven and cleansed, – God supplies the fact; you are made whole, just as Christ gave the paralytic power to walk when the man believed that he was healed. It is so if you believe it.

Do not wait to feel that you are made whole, but say, "I believe it; it is so, not because I feel it, but because God has promised."

Jesus says, "What things soever ye

desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Mark 11:24. There is a condition to this promise – that we pray according to the will of God. But it is the will of God to cleanse us from sin, to make us His children, and to enable us to live a holy life. So we may ask for these blessings, and believe that we receive them, and thank God that we have received them. It is our privilege to go to Jesus and be cleansed, and to stand before the law without shame or remorse. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:1.

Henceforth you are not your own; you are bought with a price. "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold;... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Peter 1:18, 19. Through this simple act of believing God, the Holy Spirit has begotten a new life in your heart. You are as a child born into the family of God, and He loves you as He loves His Son.

Now that you have given yourself to Jesus, do not draw back, do not take yourself away from Him, but day by day say, "I am Christ's; I have given myself to Him;" and ask Him to give you His Spirit and keep you by His grace. As it is by giving yourself to God, and believing Him, that you become His child, so you are to live in Him. The apostle says, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him." Colossians 2:6.

Some seem to feel that they must be on probation, and must prove to the Lord that they are reformed, before they can claim His blessing. But they may claim the blessing of God even now. They must have His grace, the Spirit of Christ, to help their infirmities, or they cannot resist evil. Jesus loves to have us come to Him just as we are, sinful, helpless, dependent. We may come with all our weakness, our folly, our sinfulness, and fall at His feet in penitence. It is His glory to encircle us in the arms of

His love and to bind up our wounds, to cleanse us from all impurity.

Here is where thousands fail; they do not believe that Jesus pardons them personally, individually. They do not take God at His word. It is the privilege of all who comply with the conditions to know for themselves that pardon is freely extended for every sin. Put away the suspicion that God's promises are not meant for you. They are for every repentant transgressor. Strength and grace have been provided through Christ to be brought by ministering angels to every believing soul. None are so sinful that they cannot find strength, purity, and righteousness in Jesus, who died for them. He is waiting to strip them of their garments stained and polluted with sin, and to put upon them the white robes of righteousness; He bids them live and not die.

God does not deal with us as finite men deal with one another. His thoughts are thoughts of mercy, love, and tenderest compassion. He says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins." Isaiah 55:7; 44:22.

"I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." Ezekiel 18:32. Satan is ready to steal away the blessed assurances of God. He desires to take every glimmer of hope and every ray of light from the soul; but you must not permit him to do this. Do not give ear to the tempter, but say, "Jesus has died that I might live. He loves me, and wills not that I should perish. I have a compassionate heavenly Father; and although I have abused His love, though the blessings He has given me have been squandered, I will arise, and go to my Father, and say, 'I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son: make me as one of Thy hired servants.'" The parable tells you how the wanderer will be received:

"When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Luke 15:18-20.

But even this parable, tender and touching as it is, comes short of expressing the infinite compassion of the heavenly Father. The Lord declares by His prophet, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Jeremiah 31:3. While the sinner is yet far from the Father's house, wasting his substance in a strange country, the Father's heart is yearning over him; and every longing awakened in the soul to return to God is but the tender pleading of His Spirit, wooing, entreating, drawing the wanderer to his Father's heart of love.

With the rich promises of the Bible before you, can you give place to doubt? Can you believe that when the poor sinner longs to return, longs to forsake his sins, the Lord sternly withholds him from coming to His feet in repentance? Away with such thoughts! Nothing can hurt your own soul more than to entertain such a conception of our heavenly Father. He hates sin, but He loves the sinner, and He gave Himself in the person of Christ, that all who would might be saved and have eternal blessedness in the kingdom of glory. What stronger or more tender language could have been employed than He has chosen in which to express His love toward us? He declares, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Isaiah 49:15. (...)

As you read the promises, remember they are the expression of unutterable love and pity. The great heart of Infinite Love is drawn toward the sinner with boundless compassion. "We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." Ephesians 1:7. Yes, only believe that God is your helper. He wants to restore His moral image in man. As you draw near to Him with confession and repentance, He will draw near to you with mercy and forgiveness.

Work out...

Continued from page 32

tours of salvation – the beginning, the continuation, and the culmination – are guaranteed by God's grace to everyone who believes in Him, and walks with Him. As Karl Barth has noted: "It is God who gives each one whatever he accomplishes in 'working out his salvation.'... As such we put ourselves entirely into the power of God, that as such we recognize that all grace, that everything – the willing and the accomplishing, the beginning and the end, the faith and the revelation, the questions and the answers, the seeking and the finding – comes from God and is reality only in God.... Man cannot put his salvation into practice except as he recognizes: it is *God ...!*"⁵

That is the beauty of the gospel. God is paramount in the salvation of humans. His grace initiates and His grace completes the redemptive process. "Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings."⁶ For God is at work in us.

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