

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

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**Jerusalem and Athens:
Two worldviews, two
schools of thought**

**Who are you? Sense of
identity – A Christian
perspective**

**Why do different
scientists interpret reality
differently?**



Volume 23

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EDITORIAL

The faith of your friends

We welcome John Wesley Taylor V as the new editor of *Dialogue* journal. Dr. John Fowler will continue to work with the journal, although he has officially retired after 53 years of work for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. John Wesley Taylor V joins the journal after working for seven years at Southern Adventist University, USA. He was dean of their School of Education and Psychology. Before that, he served for seven years as a professor and in a variety of academic administrative roles at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIIAS), in the Philippines. For the seven years prior to that, Dr. Taylor was at Montemorelos University in Mexico, where he was dean of the Division of Graduate Studies. Over the years, he has been a mentor to many undergraduate and graduate students.

Dr. Taylor was born to missionary parents in Puerto Rico. He has published copiously in English and Spanish and is a popular speaker for conferences, including a variety of events for university students and professionals. He earned a doctor of philosophy from Andrews University, USA, and a Doctor of Education (EdD) degree from the University of Virginia, USA. These broad and international experiences in a range of settings enable Dr. Taylor to appreciate the challenges *Dialogue* readers face in the course of their university studies in countries around the world.

While we have a new editor, the goals of *Dialogue* remain the same. In the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), there is a remarkable story about friendship. There are five friends, one of whom is paralyzed and bedridden. He and his four friends were convinced that Jesus could do something about that. We don't know whether he was born that way, had an accident, or developed immobilizing depression later in life. We do know that there was a psychological and spiritual part, and that Jesus addressed that first. We also know that these were not fair-weather acquaintances. They were true friends.

They hoisted their bedridden friend on their shoulders, bed and all, and were off. It could be they had done this many times before, so that he could get some fresh

air or go out to watch his able-bodied buddies run around or work in the fields. But this time, there were insurmountable obstacles. They got to their destination but could not carry their friend in to where Jesus was because there were too many people blocking the way. They just knew that Jesus would help him, and they were determined to find a way to make the connection. Since they couldn't get to Jesus through the crowded door, up they climbed to the roof. They removed some roof tiles above the spot where Jesus was seated. Through the opening in the roof, they let their paralyzed friend down, still on his gurney-bed, much to the amazement



John Wesley Taylor V

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Editorial

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of the crowd. “When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’” (see Mark 2:5, Matt. 9:2, Luke 5:20).

This point should not be missed, and it is restated in all three gospels. Jesus took note of *their* faith – not his faith alone. Sometimes we overemphasize the individual and overlook the importance of one’s family and friends. This man had faith, it seems. But he could not take a single step towards Christ so that he might be healed. His friends did for him what he could not do himself. As a result of their faith as a group, Jesus forgave the paralytic his sins. Then he healed him, to the astonishment of all – except his believing friends.

Dialogue journal is that kind of a friend, to encourage and to carry you to the Lord if you should be feeling too overwhelmed, discouraged, or demoralized to go yourself. And that’s the kind of friend each one of us can be to others as well.

Lisa M. Beardsley-Hardy

—Lisa M. Beardsley-Hardy
Editor-in-Chief

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Philosophical speculation and scientific research in which God is not acknowledged are making skeptics of thousands. In the schools of today, the conclusions that learned men have reached as the result of their scientific investigations are carefully taught and fully explained; while the impression is distinctly given that if these learned men are correct, the Bible cannot be. Skepticism is attractive to the human mind. The youth see in it an independence that captivates the imagination, and they are deceived. Satan triumphs. He nourishes every seed of doubt that is sown in young hearts. He causes it to grow and bear fruit, and soon a plentiful harvest of infidelity is reaped.

— Ellen G. White (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 439)

Jerusalem and Athens: Two worldviews, two schools of thought

by Fernando Aranda Fraga

Between a theo-centric understanding of the universe and anthropocentric view, represented by Jerusalem and Athens, which shall we choose? To a Christian, the answer should be clear.

Jerusalem vs. Athens. Why should we consider a theme that compels us to choose between one city over another? What significant differences do we find regarding the conception of reality and foundation of thinking, as represented by these two cities? How is it possible that two schools of thought, so different from one another, managed to coalesce so much so that it gave rise to a new conception of the world – a clash of ideas so powerful that it was capable of creating a totally new culture, what we now call “occidental Christian culture?”

The Jerusalem paradigm

To begin with, let us review some historical-geographical facts pertaining to the thought characterized by Jerusalem.

A little more than 1500 years before Christ – Israel, chosen by Yahweh – came on the world scene. The Israelites were chosen to manifest Yahweh and His character before the world. Years later, they established themselves in the promised land of Palestine, and eventually Jerusalem became its capital, as well as its holy city with the temple in its midst. By the time the geographical Jerusalem materialized, centuries of faith and belief, life and ethics, worship and

service forged into a system whose central concern was the God Yahweh. The city, selected by Yahweh for His people, became not only the capital of Israel, but also an embodiment of great cultural, political, and religious significance.

It is not just the geography of the city that led to the school of thought that the name has come to symbolize. For that we should turn to the significant acts that determined the identity of the people of the Jewish nation. Those significant acts can be clearly identified along the vast journey spanning decades of learning through the desert. These acts are even more significant in the collective memory of these people, because they took place within the scope of a very close relationship that they maintained with their God. Only by way of synoptic recollection can we identify the significant particular acts, for example: the blessings and material wealth Abraham received; Moses’ tutelage in the school of the Pharaohs; the 10 plagues of Egypt that resulted in the final liberation of the chosen people; their long, tough, and treacherous walk through the desert; the giving of God’s law through Moses; the organization of the people; the cloud that guided them through the desert; the

ark of the covenant; the tabernacle; and the salvific symbolism of the sanctuary. The list is long.

The Greek paradigm

The origins of the Greek paradigm can be found in a region removed a short distance from what would later become the place of Athenian settlement. That region is Asia Minor; more precisely, a group of small islands situated across from the Asian continent’s Turkish coast: the archipelago whose biggest island is the Island of Miletus.

At the turn of the sixth century B.C., a philosophy arose in Miletus that was in opposition to what was common for the era: the so-called mythological understanding. Thales of Miletus founded the Milesian school. His philosophy initiated a rational tradition, even though at the beginning it had its mythology. It took almost two centuries for the first Greek philosophy to shed its mythological vestiges. What emerged was a basic explanation of reality (*physis*). That explanation actually belongs to the level of science (*episteme*), and no longer to the level of opinion (*doxa*) which is typical of mythology. This marks a fundamental paradigm shift.

What was it that really changed: the method or content? Actually both,

because a methodological shift involving a revolution of thought also affects its contents, and not haphazardly, but rather at the crux. Let us briefly review how such a paradigmatic shift came about in the understanding of the early Greek philosophy – the move from myth to logos – by bringing into relief those remnants of pure myth that were present in the emerging philosophical paradigm in its first few centuries and subsequent development.

Myth is the non-scientific explanation of reality, of nature, the Greek *physis*. It was a vision as if divinely gifted, a vital force, breathed, with no beginning or end, but with a finality – a Greek conceptual notion, akin to the concept of destiny (*dike*), upon which both philosophy and Protestant theologies, especially since the 19th century, became dependent. While this *physis* was material in constant flux, betraying that it was subject to time, the changes, according to pre-Socratic philosophers, were mere

appearance. What remained in the *physis* was its very essence, that which was not affected by time (*chronos*), that which was non-temporal, and thus ultimately immutable and eternal.

The polemic between Heraclitus and Parmenides (530 B.C.) illustrates what was for the Greeks nature's ambivalent quality. However, both men were in fundamental agreement on the notion that in spite of perpetual motion, there exists a substratum that does not change, and hence there is a permanence about the essence of a thing which Heraclitus called *logos*. For both philosophers, the emphasis is to be placed upon reason, the *logos*, which is not subject to *chronos*, the latter which governs the eternal becoming the material and tangible world.

This pre-Socratic philosophical development became the foundation of all subsequent philosophies in their attempt to propose a solution to the ambivalence of being – such as, “the one and the many,” “the eternal and

the temporal,” “the immutable and the changeable,” “the static and the movable,” “the intelligible and the sensible,” and even “the spiritual and the material,” which summarizes the quintessence of the opposition.

Greek philosophy: Its pervasive influence

This opposition did not stay limited to ancient Greek philosophy. It prevailed throughout the Middle Ages, when scholars – the majority of whom were Catholics, along with some Islamic scholars – learned neo-Aristotleianism, reformulating the fundamental dualism and clothing it in religious garb with a bit of retouching, yet without major change to its very essence. That is how during the Middle Ages, the intellectual was set in opposition to the physical and the material, and the position was allowed to prevail. The intellect thus received a primacy over the body, as is clearly the case in the Thomistic-Aristotleian version of the relation between the body and soul, now wrapped in the Christian worldview. Between the Platonic-Augustinian dualism and the Aristotleian-Thomistic dualism, the Catholic Church had to take a central position with some nuanced differences, but the essential aspect remained the same. Platonic dualism, made official and canonized by the Church after the assumption of Augustinian philosophy, was tinged with Thomas Aquinas, recreating the Aristotleian position and thus delimiting earlier immortality of the soul to the agent intellect (*intellectus agens*). The agent intellect is now the intellectual part of the soul that enjoys immortality, and therefore eternity toward the future (because it was created, it had an origin), immateriality, spirituality and, by extension, non-temporality.

Such dualism was reiterated by Hegel in the 19th century in a pantheistic setting, very appropriate for an age which had just begun to escape the dominance of deism throughout

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modernity and walked toward neopanthemism, which would hold court during the 20th and 21st centuries. Yet in Hegel (1770-1831), dualism did not take place at the level of the individual or particular entities, but at the level of an overriding essence that is the sum of all history and dialectic manifestations. That is, Absolute Spirit's very life, which comes to be after a series of matches and counter-matches that occurred in a spiritual-material world, where it will continue to differentiate until it acquires its perfect form and reaches absoluteness, a maximal expression of dualism where the spiritual – in keeping with Greek philosophy and mythology – substantially prevails over the very material that served as a vehicle in its development.

A little later, the history of thought suffered a paradigm shift or epistemological interruption. This was the time of dialectical materialism, greatly influenced by Hegelianism as it pertained to method, but endowed with a more realistic metaphysics that was concerned with politics and economics.

That concern came to fruition in Karl Marx (1818-1883), whose work bears the mark of a Hegel disciple, Feuerbach, the father of atheism and materialism. Marx placed reason firmly on solid ground, dismissing the spiritual as a mere superfluous phenomena. The spiritual had no place in the purely material world of Karl Marx.

At the threshold of the 19th century, Nietzsche's (1844-1910) metaphysical thought constituted another hinge in the paradigm shift that would take place at the beginning of the 20th century with the greatest determination. Space does not allow a full treatment of Nietzsche's philosophy. However, it needs to be noted that his concept of Being greatly influenced the existentialists of the new century.

Heidegger (1889-1976) is perhaps one such well-known existentialist of the 20th century. He returned to the essential temporality that constitutes

the Being, meaning that it is time that constitutes Being's essentiality. On one hand, such a revolution signified the abandonment of the concept that temporality was foreign to the Being in its most intimate essential reality. Ever since Heidegger, these aspects were considered as the constitutive properties of the Being.



A paradigmatic breach such as that of Heidegger's and all the atheist existentialism that followed had profound implications as it relates to the types of being, and the Being in general, interpreted as *ontos* – the Being in its totality, the ultimate substratum of reality and pure phenomena to which it is restricted. A *noumenal* reality does not exist. This has been annihilated by the temporal conscience. Immortality of the soul no longer exists, and there is no place for any kind of dualism. The Being is time, and time is its essential constituent.

Where is God in this outline? Well, Heidegger himself thematized it. Without denying God, he took an agnostic position. In as much as understanding depends on experience, and since we do not have any experience of God within the space-time continuum, we are unable to affirm His existence. Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), reknowned existential athe-

ist, held an idea analogous to that of Heidegger, while much more engaged in the description of the conscience.

The development of both paradigms had profound implications for theology, including the mere lay, non-scholarly, understanding of the sacred Scriptures. Until Heidegger and the meridian of existentialism, it can be said that all of theology was dogmatic. In this respect, we cannot draw any distinction between Catholic and Protestant theology. Both are written in the same paradigmatic style. This is the case up until the 20th century, when Bultmann (1884-1976) reformulated all biblical exegesis, following the new metaphysics that had been inaugurated by Heidegger. Bultmann, who first studied theology in high school at Tübingen, brought prominence to the new movement in theology started by theologians such as Strauss, Weisse, Wilke, Wrede, Schmidt, and Kähler. The aim of Bultmann's theology is to demythologize the biblical narrative. Thus, much of theology was reduced to mere allegory, rescuing the believer's faith, like an event that is not necessarily blessed by an existent and real phenomenological correlate, such as the historical Jesus, for example. Scholarly theology, is therefore committed to the lurid byways of the historical-critical method – a path from which it is very difficult to escape.¹

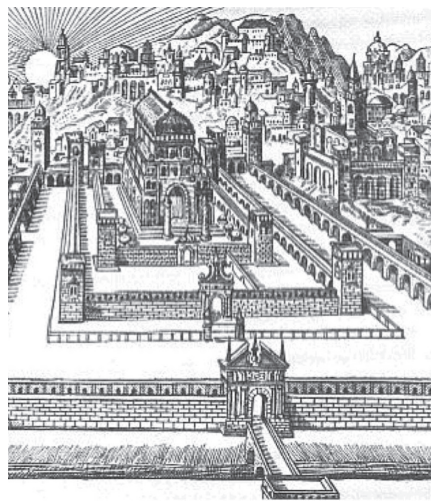
Back to Jerusalem

During this time when all these ideas were developing, what was happening to the philosophic concept symbolized by Jerusalem? Let us try to describe its fundamental paradigm, by which we shall address its metaphysics, its concept of Being.

It is here that the Bible sheds light on the basic contours of the paradigm represented by ancient Jerusalem. In what way? Because the Bible is a real historical account, through which God reveals Himself in many theophanies. Beginning with the creation of the world and humanity, God breaks

into human time without affecting His constituent essence. According to biblical account, God *is*, and therefore He is not bound by Heidegger's assertion of "the silence regarding God." This means divinity need not remain bound to this temporal dimension – a human dimension – in order to enable both realities (human and divine) to communicate with one another. Such a requirement is the fundamental error of the Athenian paradigm. For since the very beginnings of philosophy, in the far-removed ancient Greek world, philosophical thought established its basic idea and epistemological principle that "like is known by like." But who said that is how it ought to be? Why should all metaphysics and epistemology be subject to such a principle? Ensnared at the very beginnings of Moses' record, there is a passage which illustrates this point.

We could read Exodus 3 in its entirety, but we will place special emphasis on verse 14. Here God appears in one of His space-time theophanies: "And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And He said, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you'" (NKJV). We are not sitting before a mere rhetorical expression; no, this has to do with a primordial judgement by which the Divine propels Himself toward His interlocutor, Moses, with the purpose of entrusting to him a message for the people about the pact, along with the message of the greatest authority in existence for the people of Israel. In this way the Divine is manifest simultaneously in His temporal – a flaming bush that paradoxically, is never consumed – and non-temporal character, because the Divine makes explicit His essential constituent character. The God Yahweh, as long as He is in contact with Moses, is in time and occupies a special place; thus, the Divine who presents Himself before Moses, with the purpose of giving a message, makes a phenomenological appearance in the space-time continu-



um and communicates "face to face" with Moses, His spokesman before the people of the covenant. Behold, divine super temporality. God does not remain behind the bush, although it is where He phenomenizes Himself, but while phenomenizing, He breaks into human time, yet transcends it.

This is how God breaks in. He is in human history and yet beyond and over it. If this is not the case, there are only two plausible options.

1. God is reduced to time and matter. In such a case, we invite a pantheistic posture, for Divinity is no longer non-material; instead it remains arrested in the material. Upon reducing the Divine to human and the rest of material reality, we confuse the Divine and the material. Thus springs forth new-age religions, founded upon a fundamental neo-pantheism, by which the Divine is shaped and exists in the mere and individual consciousness.

2. The alternative to such a pantheistic conception is God, who is located in the periphery of theism. This is true of the classical theism of basic Thomistic Catholic theology which, when taken to the limit of its internal logic, finds itself rehearsing Aristotle's conception of God as the First Unmoved Mover that moves, by mere attraction, without being moved in turn by anything. Of course, it is

not necessary to go as far as does the Aristotelian theology. Just think of the difficulties that Catholic Thomistic theology and much of Protestant theology have to explain the communication between God and human.

Now, what are the implications for religion of these two options? And, more important still, is Adventist theology and its entire body of doctrine affected, especially with regards to our positions on health and education?²

Epilogue

1. Our theological thinking has not always been consistent and structurally integral with the concept of Being, evidenced and described in the Bible, beginning with the concept of God and consequently, the concept of existence, neither of which can be understood unless they are historically located.

2. Our concept of education has also not been consistent with the biblical ideal of a wholistic and integrated approach to education. Too often this concept of an integrated, whole-person approach to education is no more than mere speech, and is not well understood in its entirety because it is not known. We have not tried to truly understand the basis of such an education, nor the reasons for holding it. Many times we borrow ideas from other systems without taking the time to sift through them or formulate our own belief system in which there is no place for the dualisms of any kind, either mechanistic concepts, evolutionary or anti-teleological. For example, how much importance do we give to our education system to the "harmonious education of all human faculties," placing on equal level of importance of physical, intellectual, and spiritual development? Of course, we have well-written words, but do we really accomplish this, and is this clearly manifested in the training curriculum for our students?

3. This is not a minor issue, because it impacts heavily on the curriculum

of each program of study, as well as each of the subjects that shape it, not only in natural sciences, where competing material is easy to pinpoint and cut out, but especially in the social sciences that are based on certain values which, if cut out, would overturn the whole discipline (biological and social evolution, behaviorism, non-teleological, non-historicism, etc.).

4. The same applies to the area of health. Actually, in our hospitals and clinics, “interpreted as a network of psycho-physical-mental-spiritual health,” can we not find traces of an irreducible dualism in our medical healing practices? For example, do we have a clear idea of the intrinsic connection between the physical and the mental components of a given sickness? Or do we simply treat them as a purely physical problem? How much emphasis do we put on the development of a wholistic whole-person approach to the planning of treatment, surgery, and use of drugs, in line with a theology of Being as historical, real, and concrete, and starting with the human being in the Creator’s image and likeness?

5. Judeo-Christian theology provides sufficient ground for knowledge without having to rely on Greek-based philosophies. All we have to do is base our theological understanding in the historical story that God through His prophets and messengers has made known in certain specific historical situations and through His Word.

6. We need to realize that our theology and philosophy of education and health can find a solid basis in Scripture. This will, of course, entail the need to redefine the concept of Being in general as well as its relationship to all beings. But such a reformulation does not need to owe anything to Greek-based philosophies, such as the Western basic axiom of dualistic metaphysics, as well as the new metaphysics of the 20th century existential phenomenology.

7. At the foundation of every

thought and any logic of the entity of Being can be found the real and concrete fact of “I am who I am” of Exodus 3:14. This view of being is both manifest in a particular historical moment, as well as transcends space and time of the entire history of humankind and of the universe created by God.

To conclude, the entire debate enumerated above can be summarized in asking the question: should we be guided by the commitment and preoccupations of Jerusalem or Athens? The Adventist answer should leave us in no doubt.

Fernando Aranda Fraga (Ph.D., Catholic University of Santa Fe, Argentina), is a professor of graduate studies at, and research director of, Montemorelos University, Nuevo Leon, Mexico.

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1. *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 1921; *Religion without Myth*, with Karl Jaspers, 1954.
2. See: Fernando L. Canale, *A Criticism of Theological Reason: Time and Timelessness as Primordial Presuppositions*. Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, volume 10 (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1987).

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Who are you?

Sense of identity – A Christian perspective

by John Wesley Taylor V and
John Wesley Taylor IV

While identity does have something to do with what you have, you will be disappointed if you base it on material assets. There is something greater.

“Who are you?”

Have you ever asked someone that question? The responses are interesting. “I’m the son of Frank Sandoval.” “I’m a chemist.” “I’m from Ghana.” “I’m the owner of this Ferrari.” “I’m one who enjoys life.” These answers are revealing. They show where the person places value regarding his or her identity.

Your identity is no different. It largely depends on how you answer three basic questions: (1) What do I have? (2) What do I do? (3) To whom am I connected? The answers to these questions shape your identity.

What you have

For many people, identity is about the possessions they have, the tangible things they own. The more they have, the better people view them – or so they believe. They bask in the glory of having the most of something, or the best of something, and so they seek to obtain more money, newer gadgets, and greater status.

This view creates a value system in our society where everything is not worth the same. The price for a rare item is much higher. So we look for something that most people don’t have, perhaps a type of car or style of clothing. We long to be unique. When we have that “uniqueness” in our possession, we begin to see our-

selves in a new way. After all, this is how people will remember us. It becomes our form of identity.

What happens, though, when these distinctions fade – when you lose your wealth, or your trinkets tarnish, or everyone unexpectedly seems to have what you thought was only yours? Suddenly, you feel devalued. The foundation of your identity has collapsed.

While identity *does* have something to do with what you have, you will be disappointed again and again if you base it on material assets. There is something greater.

The intangibles. Your identity of *what you have* should focus on the intangibles. The inner traits of peace, joy, courage, faith, and love are what really count (Galatians 5:22, 23). They provide the basis for a stable, positive sense of identity – one that cannot be taken from you (Luke 10:42; John 16:22).

Of course, not everything that is intangible builds a positive identity. Bitterness, selfishness, and negative thinking can hurt your identity more than you may realize. These negative traits easily embed themselves on the mind and can become a way of life, jeopardizing your relationships, your health, and your own self-concept.

On the other hand, you can focus on building positive traits. They do

not, however, simply arrive by osmosis. Rather, you must intentionally decide to nurture these inner, intangible attributes. This is where the power of choice comes into play – a will that is empowered by God and guided by the Holy Spirit, but set in motion by a personal decision.¹ It is your choice. You may choose to live with joy, peace, and love in your life – regardless of whether or not you have material possessions, money, or fame.

The higher order of things. Once you understand that the intangible things you have are the most valuable, possessions aren’t so essential. The main goal in life, then, is no longer to make money, but to develop character.

This does not mean, however, that we should just give up our jobs and houses and live on the street. When you understand the higher order of things, you realize that God is the Giver of our physical possessions. He invites you, in fact, to come to Him for your physical needs. “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him” (Matthew 7:11)!² It is simply a matter of priorities. “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). Jesus

is saying, “Don’t worry about these physical things. They do not make for a lasting identity anyway. I will be your Father, you will be my child, and I will take care of you.”

Ellen White notes, “Worldly display, however imposing, is of no value in God’s sight. Above the seen and temporal, He values the unseen and eternal. The former is of worth only as it expresses the latter.”³ This, then, is the higher order: first come to Christ, not worrying what you will eat or what you will wear (Matthew 6:25-28). Then, as you seek to nurture those attributes that are like His character, He will provide for your needs. Your identity will be secure in this confidence.

What you do

In the world, identity is very much about *what you do*. It seems that our society is always demanding that we do more, work harder, and achieve greater things. While it can be helpful at times to have such targets in our lives, they can become detrimental when they become the main goal of life. In fact, one reason why many people are over-stressed is because they are trying to achieve too much.

Our generation has seen a growth in workaholics – individuals who have become obsessed with performance. The quest for approval has become the prime motivation. I remember, for example, when learning to play the piano that I would often find myself practicing to perform, rather than seeking the meaning and enjoyment of the piece. How is it for you?

The problem seems to be that these demands of social conformity take control of your life. We live in a culture, for example, that pressures people to behave in certain ways. As an adolescent, you were not “cool” unless you were on the varsity team at school, attended parties, or dressed in a particular way. It doesn’t change as you grow up. In actuality, we have trained a generation to give in to peer

pressure to obtain an identity. The result? A society that would rather go with the flow than stand up for what it believes is right.

On the other hand, some people feel that they have to do something radical in order to gain a name for themselves. This is why it is not uncommon to see individuals attempting dangerous stunts or, in some cases, engaging in extreme sports. This is where their idea of identity resides, so they go out and risk their lives needlessly for a moment of presumed honor. Perhaps, all that they really wanted was to be noticed, to be appreciated, to be identified.

What you don’t do. While the perspective of looking at your achievements for identity is misplaced, so also is basing your identity on what you *don’t* do. As Adrian Ebens observes, “In Satan’s kingdom you are accounted a citizen by doing or not doing.”⁴

Many times, Christians pride themselves on what they don’t do – “I don’t steal,” “I’ve never killed anyone,” “I don’t eat meat,” “I don’t drink alcohol.” Early on, I found this trap particularly enticing. For the most part, I was a good kid (personal reality check). My parents had trained me well, and I was quite proud about my ability to stay out of trouble. My identity, however, was based on my own achievement – my success at avoiding certain undesirable behaviors.

Achievements, however, have a way of lifting you to an emotional high when you succeed and then dropping you to the depths of depression when you fail. By yourself, you ultimately fail. Ebens argues, “Whether you seek to perform or seek not to perform, the issue is still performance rather than relationship.”⁵

Perhaps the greatest problem, however, is that your lack of evil works can camouflage your allegiance to Satan’s kingdom. If the devil can’t

win you over with evil deeds, then he will create a legalistic counterfeit to God’s way of sonship, a counterfeit of avoidances. A counterfeit, however, is actually very similar to the original. While you know that God’s kingdom is neither based on personal accomplishments nor avoidances, your Christian identity is still connected to what you do.

Reaching outward. In the Christian perspective, rather than focusing on yourself, you look beyond yourself. Rather than wondering, “What can I do to get attention today?”, you ask, “How can I make a difference?” You reach out to others – through *worship* and *service*.

One way to reach out to God is through worship. Once you realize what God has done in your life, the natural response is to praise Him. The psalmist said it well: “He brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth – praise to our God” (Psalm 40:2-3). Thankfulness is, indeed, key to any healthy relationship.

When you are grateful for something someone has done for you, you feel an indebtedness that will lead you to do things that please that person. In the same way, when your life is filled with gratitude, God’s commandments no longer seem to be a burden. The motive behind your obedience will be love, rather than necessity.

When God gave the Ten Commandments to the Israelites, they readily promised to obey them (Exodus 19:8)... out of fear. This sense of necessity, however, was short-lived (Exodus 32:1-6). To be effective, the principles of God’s law, the expression of His character, must reside in the fabric of your life.⁶ They must become a dimension of your identity. “This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I

will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Jeremiah 31:33).

Jesus reminded His listeners that love to God should find expression in love toward fellow human beings (Matthew 22:35-40). This love for others finds expression through service, and service comes through love for one another (Galatians 5:13). When you care about others and seek to make a difference in their lives, you begin to serve them. Your actions are acts of kindness, rather than self-aggrandizement. You will have a spirit of compassion and will enjoy doing things to benefit others. This reflects back on your identity.

Geiger explains, “Experiencing God overflow out of your life to serve others, trumps anything the world has to offer. There is a blessing in serving that cannot be experienced any other way.”⁷ This effect includes a sense of personal worth. As you reach out to others through worship and service, you yourself will experience an enhanced sense of personal efficacy and value. These, in turn, contribute to a positive identity.

To whom you are connected

Finally, personal identity is shaped by relationships. In contemporary society, however, emphasis is placed on the *horizontal* plane. Here, we tend to focus on the way in which others view us. The idea promoted is that our value is determined by the consensus of the “important people” around us. This is why students at schools form cliques, why the number of friends on social networking sites is important, and why many persons want to be connected with those in high positions.

The problem is that using a select group of friends and supporters to establish your popularity and personal identity can be unsettling. Such relationships can be shallow and, at times, fickle. When people lose their

status, for example, what happens to their “friends”? Think of the prodigal son in Luke 15. When his money ran out, where were his friends in his time of need? Most people feel devastated as their friends slip away to find someone else who is “higher up.” Without a firm foundation for your relationships, an identity based on popularity crumbles.

A young lady described her life in this way, “I began to cling desperately to each relationship that came into my life as my source of security and purpose. My dating life became my identity. My emotions became hopelessly battered by each rocky relationship.”⁸ This is hardly a foundation for a positive, stable identity.

Another potential problem with the horizontal dimension is that people often “get used” for another’s benefit. In other words, persons are pushed down in order for someone else to climb to a higher level. Their gain is your loss.

The story is told about a caterpillar named Stripe which was trying to succeed in life. One day, he saw a column of caterpillars pushing and pulling on each other, trying to climb to the top of the pile. So Stripe decided to climb, too, and find out what was at the top. As he climbed, though, he saw that many caterpillars lost their hold as they got stepped on, and tumbled into oblivion. Stripe pressed upward, however, determined to reach the top. When he finally arrived, he discovered that there was actually nothing at the top.⁹

There must be something better in life than trampling others – trying to establish our identity by crushing theirs. After all, we, like the caterpillars, are to experience a transformation (Romans 12:2). We were made to fly.

The vertical dimension. The vertical connection is the most important relationship that you can develop. This is the relationship with your heavenly Father. To understand the

full value of this relationship and how it affects our identity, we must understand the battle behind the scenes.

In the beginning, God created us in His image (Genesis 1:26, 27). Tragically, we all have sinned and lost much of our resemblance to God, particularly in terms of His character (Romans 3:23). Consequently, our God-given identity has been distorted. The good news is that Christ loved us, and redeemed us from the kingdom of Satan (Titus 2:14). That is why Jesus came to earth, lived a sinless life, and died on the cross. The best part, however, is that He rose again to break the power of eternal death and to restore in us His own identity. “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God” (1 John 3:1)! To give you identity, Christ purchased you and made it possible for you to become His child.

What does it mean to be God’s child? It means that you have a personal relationship with the Father, that you can come to Him anytime, that you are an heir to His kingdom (Romans 8:17; Galatians 3:29; 4:7; Titus 3:7; Hebrews 1:14; James 2:5). The best part, however, is that your heavenly Father has promised never to leave you nor forsake you.¹⁰ With these benefits in mind, Ellen White wrote, “Would that all could understand the value that there is in acknowledging our relationship and loyalty to Him whom we claim as our Father.”¹¹ Being a child of God is an incredible experience, and provides you with the most stable and affirming source of identity. With the privilege, however, there is responsibility.

First, being a child of God calls for you to give God your agenda – your own plans and desires. “Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, ‘Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all

my work be wrought in Thee.”¹² In essence, God calls us to give up our fragile, self-constructed sense of identity and to rely on Him for our true identity – based on His acts of creation and redemption.

Second, being His child asks us to listen to His voice. Geiger asks, “Will we ever stop talking to listen? Instead of listening, our prayers are often long run-on sentences with no commas and no pauses. God speaks to us, wanting to share His thoughts, but we often talk over Him.”¹³ When things don’t work out, we unfairly blame our problems on God. Perhaps

we simply didn’t take the time to listen to His instructions.

Third, as His child we must grow daily. Growth is a sign that we are learning from our Father. The more we develop, the more we will exemplify His attributes. We become like a calm lake, reflecting the beauty, the identity of the Father.

The larger perspective. Once we realize the importance of our relationship with our Father, all other relationships come into perspective. The horizontal dimension has meaning, but only in relationship to the vertical. We now see everyone else as a child of God, and no longer as an obstacle in our career path. We have glimpsed the wider horizon.

Our understanding of our identity as a brother or sister to those around us is crucial to how we relate to others. First, it enables us to love our neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40; 1 John 3:14). This view helps us resolve any differences we may have with those around us (Matthew 5:23-24). After all, our war is against Satan and his kingdom of death (Ephesians 6:12).

The perspective also clarifies how others can influence our lives in positive ways. Think about it. If it were not for your relationships, would you be the person that you are today? We all have something to learn from others. One of the most important lessons that I learned from my own father was the spirit of self-sacrifice and service. I’ll never forget the evenings when we would play table tennis in the garage. Even though my father was very busy, he would always make time for us to play. And it wasn’t just with me. He was always willing to help his students, even if his schedule was full. His motto: Live to serve. These, and many other lessons, have deeply impacted my life. Without my relationships with others, I would not be the same person I am today.

Finally, in the larger perspective, you have received a divine commis-

sion. Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁴ As a witness, you are to give both a verbal and a life testimony, so everyone can clearly see to which kingdom you belong. In reality, witness is your ultimate identity – unmasking the distorted depiction of God that Satan has drawn. This is why it is essential that you pattern your life after your King. Ultimately, people won’t see you. Rather, they will see through your words and actions an authentic, inviting portrait of God.

Conclusion

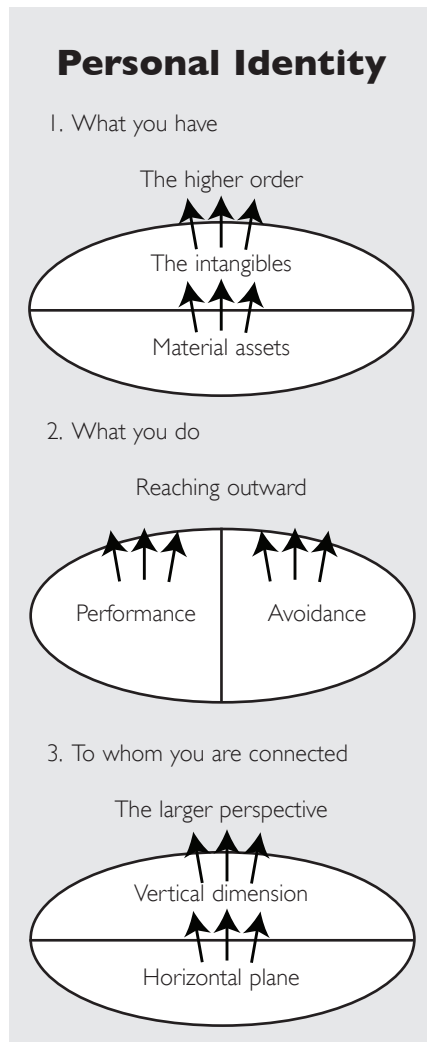
Who are you? Where do you find your identity? As we have seen, personal identity has to do with three fundamental questions: What do you have? What do you do? And, to whom are you connected?

The way you answer these questions, however, can result in either a fragile, fleeting sense of who you are, or a secure and solid identity.

In my own life, I have found that the material possessions we have, the acts of self-glory we do, and the shallow, self-seeking relationships we form will all pass away. Our true value is found in the unique qualities God has given us, in how we reach out and touch the lives of others, and in the kingdom to which we belong. This is the identity that will never fail.

When we recognize that God is the foundation for our identity, we no longer need to worry about what others think of us. Our identity is *from* God. Our identity is *for* God.¹⁵ Redeemed by God, we have been born again, born into the kingdom of Christ (John 3:3-21). We have become a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17), with a new identity — an identity that no one can destroy.

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Why do different scientists interpret reality differently?

by Humberto M. Rasi

The existence of God and whether He created the universe and life are, by definition, questions beyond the scope and the capability of naturalistic science. The answers to such questions rely on worldview assumptions, which are based on evidence that may or may not be satisfactory to equally competent scientists.

“Science does not lead to certainty. Its conclusions are always incomplete, tentative and subject to revision.” — Ian Barbour, *Religion in an Age of Science*

It is generally assumed that well-educated people who dedicate their professional lives to the scientific study of nature are able to approach their subjects with a dispassionate attitude. Using sophisticated equipment, they make careful observations, conduct experiments, develop hypotheses, propose theories, and arrive at objective conclusions in their respective areas of expertise.

Nevertheless, scientists applying the scientific method while using similar equipment to study the same aspect of nature can and do arrive at different conclusions. Why does this occur? The answer to this question can be found at three levels.

Differences in interpretation

Some of the common reasons as to why scientists reach different conclusions in their research include factors

such as the size and reliability of the sample data gathered, the adequacy of design in the experiments conducted, the precision of the equipment used, or simply human error. These factors can usually be remedied as other scientists learn of the results; review the procedures, data, and findings; then attempt to replicate the observations or experiments; and finally determine which of the conclusions or discoveries is favored by the weight of the evidence. This process is what makes science one of the most exciting human activities.

In March, 1989, two established electrochemists – Martin Fleischmann and Stanley Pons – announced they had produced nuclear fusion at room temperature, using heavy water and a palladium electrode. The reaction of the international scientific community was immediate, because the financial implications of producing energy at a very low cost are enormous. During the following years, similar experiments were conducted in many countries, conferences on the topic were convened, and well-funded research

centers were established. However, most scientists have been unable to reproduce the original results and, as a result, have reached the conclusion that the evidence does not support the original claim.¹

Different paradigms

A deeper reason for disagreement among scientists on a particular issue may be differing scientific paradigms, a concept proposed by Thomas S. Kuhn.² In his view, science is not an empirically-autonomous and objective endeavor, but a collective activity influenced by social and historical factors. During periods of “normal science,” he argued, the scientific community operates on a generally-accepted model or paradigm. However, results that don’t fit within those understandings gradually build up, until a “paradigm shift” occurs. At that point, a new consensus and paradigm provide a new set of assumptions that serve as the basis for doing science. Kuhn provides the example of the paradigm shift that occurred when the Ptolemaic geocentric view of the

universe was replaced by Copernicus' heliocentric model of the solar system.

Another significant paradigm shift occurred in the earth sciences in the 1960s, when the weight of evidence confirmed ideas that Alfred Wegener (1880–1930) had advanced regarding the movement of the continents. Up to his time, it was thought that the various continents were immovable and had been connected by land bridges that had later submerged. But during a conference in 1912, Wegener proposed that the continents had first been part of a supercontinent (which he named Pangaea) and that later they drifted apart. In 1915, he published this theory in a book on the origin of continents and oceans. For a few decades, his proposed theory of continental drift was rejected by the preeminent geologists, due in part to intellectual inertia and, more importantly, to the lack of concrete evidence and an explanatory mechanism. But after substantial new data accumulated, Wegener's idea that the continents have moved was accepted as valid and is now the working paradigm in geology, geophysics, oceanography, and paleontology.

The current debate surrounding climate change provides a prime example of a paradigm-based disagreement. For a number of years, a group of scientists have been analyzing data that suggest a recent steady increase in our planet's temperatures. Computer model projections indicate that if global warming continues at the current rate, humanity will face a series of irreversible catastrophes. However, scientists disagree over the cause; hence the two contrasting paradigms at play. One group believes that the recent rise in temperatures is caused by natural climate cycles, which occur independently of human activity. Scientists using this paradigm emphasize the correlation between solar cycles and global temperatures. The other group believes that human activity is responsible for the increase in global temper-

atures. Scientists using this paradigm look for correlations between carbon and other emissions and indices of climate change. Of course, the ethical, economic, and political implications of this debate and its outcome complicate the issue. However, once this controversy is settled, a paradigm shift may have occurred, followed by more government policies or international mandates regarding effluents and pollution.³

At a more profound level, however, disagreements among scientists in several fields may be based on what rules should be applied in interpreting the origin of the natural world and its operating laws. Is there or is there not a Supreme Being who designed, created, and sustains the universe and its creatures?⁴ This debate has been growing in intensity since the 1800s, particularly after Charles Darwin published his book *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. Why do honest scientists disagree on this fundamental question? And, more importantly, is this an issue that can be settled by applying the scientific method? These questions lead us to consider the concept of worldviews.⁵

Worldviews and their implications

All humans, including scientists, develop a worldview through which they understand, interpret, and explain reality at its most fundamental level. Since we all wish to make sense of our experiences, our personal worldview serves as a mental map that orients us in our decisions and actions.⁶ No philosophy degree is needed to possess a worldview. Even scientists are unable to approach the study of a particular object, organism, or phenomenon with a completely objective attitude, all bring to their investigation a particular set of understandings and assumptions regarding the universe and life, a worldview.⁷

Our individual worldview begins to take shape during adolescence and

matures in young adulthood. It is initially the result of various influences – family, studies, media, and the surrounding culture. We continue to adjust its contours throughout our life, due to new information and experiences.

In its most basic form, a worldview answers four questions:⁸

Who am I? – The origin, nature, and purpose of human beings.

Where am I? – The nature and extent of reality.

What is wrong? – The cause of injustice, suffering, evil, and death.

What is the solution? – Ways of overcoming these obstacles to human fulfillment.

Of course, this set of basic questions could easily be expanded.⁹ Ultimately, our worldview provides the foundation for our values and is reflected in our decisions and behavior. It influences, for example, our choice of vocation or profession, our relationship with other humans, the way we spend our financial resources, our use of technology, our attitude toward the environment, and even our socio-political decisions regarding issues of justice and peace.

The answers we give to the questions listed above can be linked by an overarching story (a meta-narrative) that integrates concepts of origin, purpose, meaning, and destiny. Imagine, for example, how two well-trained scientists with different worldviews — for example, a Bible-believing Christian and a neo-Darwinian evolutionist — would structure and articulate their overarching narrative from their individual perspectives.

It is worthwhile to note that the impact of the scientist's worldview on research questions, methods, and results has been much more significant in the historical and cosmic sciences than in the experimental and mathematical sciences.

Major worldviews

Through recorded history, humans have adopted three major worldviews,

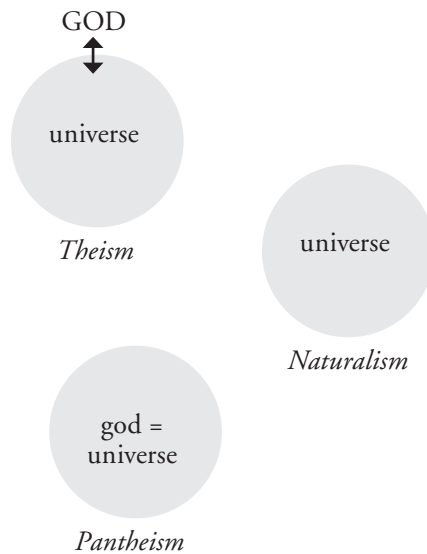
which can be summarized as follows:

Theism posits the existence of a personal God who is Creator and Sovereign of the universe. This Supreme Being is separate from His creation but acts in its operation.

Pantheism identifies an impersonal deity with the forces and workings of nature. Reality consists of the universe plus god. They are mutually interpenetrating and interacting.

Naturalism assumes that reality consists of the material universe operating according to natural laws, plus nothing else.

Although there are varieties and subsets of the three major worldviews, these can be outlined in the following manner:



It is well-known that modern science emerged during the 1500s and 1600s within the context of a theistic culture that was predominantly Christian. Pioneer thinkers and scientists in various disciplines – such as Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Pascal, Boyle, Newton, Halley, and others – believed in a Creator God who had established operating laws in the universe and nature that could be discovered and applied for the benefit of humanity. In contrast, cultures in which pantheism predominated did

not offer a favorable milieu for scientific endeavors because nature was seen as divine and therefore sacred.¹⁰

Some more-recent approaches seek to establish connections among these basic worldviews. Theistic evolution, for example, attempts to bridge Christianity and naturalism, proposing that God operates in the world through the process of evolution. Neopantheism, for its part, suggests close links between scientific materialism and religious mysticism.¹¹

Contrasting worldviews

During the last 150 years, the scientific community has gradually moved away from its Christian roots and assumed a naturalistic worldview that discounts any supernatural intervention or transcendent meaning. It is within this worldview that the sciences are generally taught, research is conducted, and articles are rejected or accepted for publication. The most popular current expression of this worldview is secular humanism.¹² The contrast between the basic tenets of biblical Christianity and secular humanism – as representatives of theism and naturalism – can be summarized in a diagram.

The biblical worldview narrative

The existence of God and whether He created the universe and life are, by definition, questions beyond the scope and the capability of naturalistic science. The answers to such questions rely on worldview assumptions, which are based on evidence that may or may not be satisfactory to equally competent scientists. Yet, these answers influence the development of hypotheses and theses, and the interpretation of data in many scientific endeavors.

From the beginning of modern science, Christian scientists have worked based on the premise that the Creator of the universe and life is the same God that communicated with humans through the Scriptures. Christians who anchor their convictions in the

Bible develop a worldview and narrative that, as interpreted by Seventh-day Adventists, include seven key moments in cosmic history.

Creation in heaven. At some time in the remote past, God creates a perfect universe and populates it with intelligent and free creatures.

Rebellion in heaven. An exalted creature rebels against God's principles and, after a struggle, is banished to earth with his followers.

Creation on earth. During six days in the recent past, God makes this planet inhabitable and creates plant and animal life, including the first pair of humans, who are endowed with free will.

Fall on earth. Tempted by the rebel creature, the first couple disobeys God and the entire web of life on this planet suffers the consequences, including a devastating global flood.

Redemption. Jesus Christ, the Creator Himself, comes to earth to rescue fallen humans, offering them free salvation and power to live a transformed life.

Second coming. At the end of time, Christ returns in glory as promised, and grants immortality to those who have accepted His offer of forgiveness and salvation.

Consummation. After a millennium passes, Christ returns to execute final judgment, eliminates evil, and restores the entire creation to its original perfection, which will last forever.

The biblical worldview and its overarching narrative are attractive because they provide an internally-coherent answer to key worldview questions. This worldview offers a satisfactory explanation for what we learn, discover, or experience in real life, and gives meaning and transcendent hope to human's deepest desires. At the same time, our Christian worldview is always in development, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, because our understanding of God's revelation is limited and progressive.¹³

Comparing the biblical and the secular

Key concept	Biblical Christianity	Secular humanism
Prime reality	A transcendent God who acts in the universe and can be known by human beings on the basis of His self-revelation.	Inanimate matter and energy.
Origin of the universe and life	Both were created by God by the power of His word to operate on the basis of cause-and-effect laws in a system He sustains and in which He freely acts.	The universe is eternal or began with a sudden cosmic explosion and operates on the basis of cause-and-effect laws in a closed system. Life appeared from nonlife by chance and natural laws.
Means of knowing truth	God's self-disclosure perceived through His created works, in the Scriptures, and especially in the person of Jesus Christ. God also communicates with humans through their conscience and reason illumined and guided by the Holy Spirit.	Through human reason and intuition, working through and confirmed by the scientific method. For others, truth is beyond human reach, if it exists at all. Ultimately, all knowledge and truth are relative to culture, time, and place.
Origin and nature of human beings	Physical-spiritual beings created perfect in God's image, capable of free moral decisions, now in an imperfect condition.	Humans are merely another form of living organism that originated through unguided evolutionary processes.
Human history	Ultimately, a meaningful sequence of events, guided by free human decisions, but supervised by God, who acts in fulfillment of His overall plan for the good of His creatures.	Unpredictable and without overarching purpose; guided both by human decisions and by natural forces beyond human understanding and control.
Basis of morality	The unchanging character of God (merciful and just), revealed in the life of Jesus Christ and in the Scriptures.	The majority opinion, contemporary customs, cultural traditions, particular circumstances, or a combination thereof.
Cause of the human predicament	Conscious rebellion against God and His principles; an attempt to enthrone humans as autonomous creatures; as a result, the image of God in humans has been defaced, and the entire world suffers.	Ignorance of true human potential, bad laws, incompetent government, lack of human cooperation, a natural human flaw, among others.
Solution to the human predicament	A spiritual rebirth: trust in divine forgiveness through Jesus Christ, which leads to a life of loving obedience to God, proper self-understanding, inner peace, and harmonious relationships.	Improved education, more support for science, technological progress, just laws, competent government, improved human tolerance and cooperation, eugenics, stronger care of the biosphere, among others.
Death	An unconscious parenthesis until the day of God's final judgment. (Other Christians: entrance into another conscious state.)	The final end of human existence in all its dimensions.
Ultimate human destiny	Transformed beings living eternally in a new earth or eternal annihilation. (Other Christians: eternal punishment.)	Nothingness and oblivion.

Conclusion

As we have seen, equally-capable scientists arrive at different conclusions due to methodological factors, to working within different paradigms, or to the contrasting worldviews they have embraced. Nevertheless, Christian scientists who conduct research from the biblical worldview perspective can comfortably work alongside other scientists who may not share their assumptions and yet jointly achieve meaningful findings and respectable conclusions. Those who accept the biblical narrative as true and reliable enjoy the advantage of having at their disposal additional options and insights provided by the Creator in the Scriptures, which can generate research questions that may lead to fruitful hypotheses, explanations, and discoveries.¹⁴

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What are you?

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7. E. Geiger, *Identity: Who You Are in Christ* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2008), p. 107.
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The Bible: A brief survey of the translation process

by Gerhard Pfandl

Among the many versions of the Bible available today, which one should you choose?

The process of Bible translations began during the third century B.C. with the translation of the Old Testament into Greek. The reason for this translation, called the Septuagint,¹ was the need for a Bible for the Greek-speaking Jews in Alexandria, who no longer spoke or understood Hebrew.

While the Septuagint was made for Greek-speaking Jews, in the Christian era this translation soon fell out of favor with the Jews, primarily because from the first century onward the Christians adopted it as their version of the Old Testament and used it freely in defense of the Christian faith. “Christians came to attach some degree of divine inspiration to the Septuagint, for some of its translations might almost appear to have been providentially intended to support Christian arguments.”² The Jews, therefore, soon produced other Greek versions.³

Other ancient Jewish versions are the Targumim (from the Aramaic *targum*, “to translate”), which are fairly free translations of the Old Testament text into Aramaic. The Targumim were the product of the official synagogue interpreters who, after the Babylonian exile, when Aramaic replaced Hebrew as the spoken language, translated the Old Testament texts into Aramaic during the worship services. These verbal paraphrases were eventually written down, and traces of them appear in a few New Testament texts.⁴

Christian versions

After the LXX (the scholarly abbreviation for the Septuagint), the oldest and most important translation of the Bible is the Syriac version called the Peshitta, or “simple,” version. Syriac is an Aramaic dialect that was spoken over a wide area in early Christian times, particularly in western Mesopotamia, where it was used more than Greek. Originally the Peshitta did not include 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, or Revelation. These books were added in A.D. 508 when the Syrian-speaking Christians underwent a schism, and a new Syriac translation included them.

At the beginning of the Christian era, the churches in the East were Greek-speaking; in the Roman provinces of Africa and Western Europe, however, Latin was the official language. Toward the end of the second century, therefore, we find references to Latin Scriptures in the writings of the church fathers. Because of the tendency of some bishops and priests to make translations of the Septuagint and New Testament manuscripts into Latin, a number of translations of various biblical texts began to appear. These fragments were later assembled and became known as the Old Latin text, also called *Itala*.

In 382, Pope Damasus I (366-384 A.D.) commissioned his secretary Jerome to produce a new Latin Bible. After revising the Old Latin texts, Jerome produced a standard text ver-

sion of the New Testament. After the death of Damasus, Jerome settled in Bethlehem, where he completed a new translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew in 405. Jerome’s Bible became known as the Vulgate (*vulga* meaning “everyday speech”). In 1546, at the Council of Trent, the Vulgate became the official Bible of the Catholic Church. It was the first book to be printed by Johannes Gutenberg in 1456.

English versions

Ancient Bible versions were of vital importance for taking the gospel to the pagan nations during the early centuries of Christianity. Similarly, during the time of the Reformation, translations into the vernacular facilitated the spread of Reformation ideas in Europe. Since then, the whole Bible has been translated into 459 languages, the New Testament into another 1,213 languages, and portions of the Bible into still another 836 languages, making a total of more than 2,500 languages.⁵

The first complete English translation is credited to John Wycliffe, a lecturer at Oxford University, in the latter part of the 14th century. Wycliffe believed that “if every man was responsible to obey the Bible... it follows that every man must know what to obey. Therefore the whole Bible should be accessible to him in a form that he could understand.”⁶

Whether Wycliffe himself took

part in the translation is uncertain, but under his influence two English versions of the Latin Vulgate were produced. One hundred fifty years later, William Tyndale, who became proficient in Greek while attending Oxford and Cambridge, translated the Greek New Testament into English. It was published in 1525 in Germany and was then smuggled in bales of cloth back into England for distribution. Church officials opposed the circulation of his translation; they bought copies and burnt them. Tyndale himself, after being betrayed by a friend, was imprisoned and executed in Belgium in 1536. In 1535, one year before Tyndale's death, Miles Coverdale published another complete translation in English. By that time, Henry VIII had made himself head of the church in England and was ready to accept English translations of the Bible.

After James I became King of England, he authorized a new translation, which since its publication in 1611 has been known as the Authorized or King James Version (KJV). More than 50 scholars, versed in Greek and Hebrew, were responsible for its production. It captured the best of all the preceding translations and far exceeded all of them. It has justifiably been called the "noblest monument of English prose."⁷ Based on the best of the earlier English versions, the KJV has remained for more than 300 years "the Bible" *par excellence* wherever the English tongue is spoken. Protestants and Roman Catholics (and Jews also, with respect to the Old Testament) have appreciated its beauty and value. Dr. Alexander Geddes, a great Roman Catholic biblical scholar at the end of the 18th century, stated that "if accuracy and strictest attention to the letter of the text is supposed to constitute an excellent version this is of all versions the most excellent."⁸

Nevertheless, at the end of the 19th century, it was felt that a revision was

necessary because: (1) Knowledge of the Hebrew vocabulary had increased since the beginning of the 17th century (about 1,500 words appear only once in the Old Testament). (2) The Greek text underlying the New Testament was the *textus receptus* (Latin for "received text"), which was based on medieval manuscripts, none of them older than about A.D. 1000. The important fourth- and fifth-century manuscript codices Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, and Alexandrinus were not available in 1611. (3) Many English words had become obsolete or archaic; others had changed in meaning. For example, the word "'knop' [Exodus 25:31-36] is an archaic word for the bud of a flower or for an ornamental knob or boss." The word "prevent" (1 Thessalonians 4:15) in the 17th century meant "to go before," or "precede," rather than "to hinder."

In 1870, the Convocation of Canterbury voted to sponsor a major revision of the King James Version. When the complete Revised Version appeared in 1885, it was received with great enthusiasm, but its popularity was short-lived because most people continued to prefer the Authorized Version.

The King James Version controversy

In 1516, the Dutch scholar Desiderius Erasmus published the first Greek New Testament in Basel, Switzerland, which became the basis of the *textus receptus*. Unfortunately, none of the Greek manuscripts available to Erasmus was older than about A.D. 1000. The *textus receptus* (a term used for the first time in 1633) preserves a form of the New Testament found in the great majority of Greek manuscripts,¹⁰ most of which were copied between A.D. 750 and 1500, and which show a high level of agreement with one another.

Since the time of Erasmus, a number of older Greek manuscripts with variant readings from the *textus*

receptus have been discovered. The most important among them are two manuscripts prepared about A.D. 350. One is called Codex Vaticanus because it was found in the library of the Vatican; the other is called Codex Sinaiticus because in 1844 it was discovered in the library of St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai. By the time of the 19th century, the number of variants among known Greek New Testament manuscripts was estimated to exceed 300,000.¹¹ In 1881, therefore, two English scholars, Brooke F. Westcott and Fenton J. Hort, published *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, which was based primarily on the ancient codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus.

It is this Greek New Testament that is attacked by "KJV-only defenders," because most modern translations are no longer based on the *textus receptus*, but rather on the Westcott and Hort and later revisions of the Greek texts. One of the chief arguments of KJV-only defenders is that the King James Bible translators relied on the *textus receptus*, which they believe was providentially preserved through the centuries from scribal mistakes and intentional changes. By contrast, the Westcott and Hort Greek text, it is alleged, is based on manuscripts produced during a period of apostasy in the church and not providentially protected from scribal changes. "Translations based on them are therefore unreliable."¹² While the fourth century certainly was a time in which false teachings entered the church, there is no evidence from the existing New Testament manuscripts that these doctrinal errors affected any of the Greek manuscripts produced during that time.

One of the most frequent criticisms of modern versions is the supposed omission of terms connected with the divinity of Jesus. For example, where the KJV repeatedly has the phrase "Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 15:11; 16:31; 1 Corinthians 5:4; 2 Corinthians

11:31; etc.), modern versions read only “Lord Jesus.” The omission of the word *Christ* in these texts is seen as a denial of Jesus’ divinity. Gail Riplinger, a leading proponent of the KJV-only defenders, writes: “Texte Marris warns, ‘New Age leaders believe and will spread the apostasy that Jesus is neither Christ nor God.’ New version editors become ‘New Age leaders by this definition.’”¹³ She completely ignores the fact that the phrase “Lord Jesus Christ,” which appears about 80 times in the KJV also appears 63 times in the Revised Standard Version (RSV) and 60 times in the New International Version (NIV). While the *textus receptus* uses this phrase more than 80 times, the older Greek manuscripts only use it about 60 times. But this does not mean that they in any way deny that Jesus was the Christ.

The charge that modern versions minimize the deity of Jesus can be found throughout the writings of KJV-only defenders. However, there are a number of places where modern versions are stronger and clearer on the deity of Jesus than the KJV. One example is John 1:18. The KJV reads, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” Modern versions like the New American Standard Bible (NASB) read, “only begotten God,” and the NIV, “God the One and Only” instead of “only begotten Son.”

Two lengthy passages are not found in the earliest manuscripts. One comprises the closing verses of Mark (16:9-20), and the other is the story of the woman taken in adultery (John 7:53-8:11). Most modern versions include these passages but indicate their omissions in the ancient manuscripts in various ways. For example, the NIV interrupts the text flow between verses 8 and 9 of Mark 16 with a centered rule (line), followed by a note, “The two most reliable early manuscripts do not have Mark 16:9-20.” Because we

do not have the original autographs, we do not know whether these stories were lost in the process of transmission or whether they were later additions of oral reports. Whatever the case, their omission in the ancient texts does not warrant the charge that modern versions have changed God’s Word.

Modern versions

The proliferation of new English versions in recent decades has made it necessary to carefully consider which translation one is going to use and for what purpose. First, we need to recognize that there are three basic types of translations.

1. Formal or literal translations attempt to translate as close as possible to the original wording, e.g., *King James Version* (KJV, 1611), *Revised Version* (RV, 1885), *Revised Standard Version* (RSV, 1952), *New American Standard Bible* (NASB, 1971), etc.

2. Dynamic equivalency translations are not so much concerned with the original wording as with the original meaning, e.g., *New English Bible* (NEB, 1970), *New International Version* (NIV, 1978), and *Revised English Bible* (REB, 1989).

3. Paraphrases of the Bible seek to restate in simplified but related ways the ideas conveyed in the original language, e.g., *The Living Bible* (TLB or LB, 1971), *The Message* (1993), and *The Clear Word* (2000). Paraphrases are more like commentaries, e.g., in *The Message*, Colossians 2:9 — “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (KJV) — is expanded to “Everything of God gets expressed in him, so you can see and hear him clearly. You don’t need a telescope, a microscope, or a horoscope to realize the fullness of Christ, and the emptiness of the universe without him.”

So, which version shall we use? For serious Bible study and preaching, it is helpful to consult several good versions. Good modern standard transla-

tions are the RSV, the NASB, and the New King James Version (NKJV). For personal and family devotions, a paraphrase may be used. Paraphrases, however, should not be used in Sabbath school or in the pulpit.

Ellen White and Bible versions

Anyone reading the writings of Ellen G. White soon realizes that she used Scripture profusely. All her articles and books are saturated with scriptural quotations from the King James Bible. Did she use other versions? Yes, but sparingly. Among the modern versions that Ellen White occasionally used were the *Revised Version* (1885), the *American Revised Version* (1901), and the translations of Bernard, Boothroyd, Leeser, Noyes, and Rotherham.¹⁴

Writing in 1931, her son W.C. White stated that “I do not know of anything in the E.G. White writings, nor can I remember of anything in Sister White’s conversations, that would intimate that she felt that there was any evil in the use of the Revised Version.... When the first revision was published, I purchased a good copy and gave it to Mother. She referred to it occasionally, but never used it in her preaching.”¹⁵ The reasons for this was that “there are many persons in the congregation who remember the words of the texts we might use as they are presented in the Authorized Version, and to read from the Revised Version would introduce perplexing questions in their minds as to why the wording of the text has been changed by the revisers and as to why it was being used by the speaker. She did not advise me in a positive way not to use the A.R.V., but she intimated to me quite clearly that it would be better not to do so, as the use of the different wording brought perplexity to the older members in the congregation.”¹⁶

Ellen White did not hesitate to use other versions, but out of concern for those who had heard or read only the King James Version, she did not

use them in public. However, she never made the use of the King James Version a criterion of orthodoxy. She was aware of the fact that copyists and translators over the centuries had introduced some changes in the text; nevertheless she could say, "I take the Bible just as it is, as the Inspired Word,"¹⁷ and so should we.

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2. F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, rev. ed. (London: Marshall Pickering, 1991), p. 141. In Isaiah 7:14, for example, the LXX uses *parthenos* ("virgin") rather than *neanis* ("young woman"), which is generally used to translate the Hebrew word *almah*.
3. The versions of Aquila and Theodotion were named after their translators.
4. For example, the expression "spirit of prophecy," which appears only in Revelation 19:10, is frequently used in the Targumim to describe the gift of prophecy, e.g., Genesis 41:38: "Pharaoh said to his servants, can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of prophecy from before the Lord?"
5. Statistical summary of the United Bible Societies of December 31, 2009. See <http://www.biblesociety.org/index.php?id=22>.
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9. R. Bridges and L. Weigle, *The King James Word Book* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994), p. 196.
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Comparing some Bible versions of John 3:16

King James Version (KJV, 1611):

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Revised Standard Version (RSV, 1952):

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

New English Bible (NEB, 1970):

"God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, that everyone who has faith in him may not die but have eternal life."

New International Version (NIV, 1978):

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

The Message (MSG, 1993):

¹⁶⁻¹⁸ "This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it. And why? Because of that person's failure to believe in the one-of-a-kind Son of God when introduced to him.

PROFILE



Trudy Morgan-Cole

Dialogue with an Adventist writer from Canada

Interview by Marcos Paseggi

Trudy Morgan-Cole is the product of an Adventist home and education. She grew up as a fourth-generation Adventist in St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada. She received all her education in the Adventist system, finishing elementary and high school at St. John's Seventh-day Adventist Academy in Newfoundland, and then graduating from Andrews University in 1986 with a B.A. in English and history. After working as a teacher in Ontario and Alberta, she returned to her hometown, where she earned a master's degree in English and counseling psychology from Memorial University. Morgan-Cole is an experienced writer; Review and Herald Publishing Association published her first book in 1986, before she graduated from Andrews. During the last 25 years, she has published 20 books (her 21st is coming out this fall), both in Adventist and secular publishing houses. Some of her books have been translated into Spanish, Portuguese, Finnish, and Serbian (forthcoming). For Adventist readers, perhaps her best-known works are the biblical narratives *Esther: A Story of Courage* (Review and Herald, 2003) and *That First Christmas: Yosef's Story* (Review and Herald, 2009), and her collection of articles about women of the Bible published under the title *Daughters of Grace* (Review and Herald, 2009). Currently, Morgan-Cole divides her time between writing and teaching adult learners in the Murphy Centre in St. John's. She is married to Jason Cole, a mechanical engineer, and they

have two children: Chris, 13, and Emma, 11.

■ *Mrs. Morgan-Cole, how and why did you start to write?*

I cannot ever remember not writing or not wanting to be a writer. I was very lucky to grow up in an Adventist family where that seemed to be a very reasonable aspiration. I grew up in an atmosphere surrounded by books, so it seemed very natural to me to start writing my own stories. I have always been writing, as long as I can remember. I think I first wrote for publication when I was 9. I wrote a poem to the church magazine *Our Little Friend*, and to my utter shock, they not only accepted it for publication, but they gave it a full page with illustrations. So I guess that was a huge boost; it made me think of writing as a reasonable way of spending my life. Writing for me has always seemed the obvious thing to do.

■ *What kind of pieces do you write?*

First, as a reader, I love reading stories, but also memoirs, biographies, and historical books. As a writer, I love stories. I think there is a tremendous power in a good story. It is true that I have written all sorts of things: articles, devotionals, and essays; however, I have always come back to writing stories, either what are commonly called biblical narratives or historical fiction.

■ *Do you feel the Seventh-day Adventist Church understands and values what*

you do for a living?

Well, without the church publishing houses and magazines, I have doubts I would be a writer. As I said, that is how I started as a writer. The Adventist publishing industry has always been very good to me. This is the place where my writing has been nurtured and encouraged. I have met wonderful people in the publishing ministry of the church. In fact, my first book would have never been published if the Review and Herald would have not organized a contest and picked mine when I was still in college.

■ *You have written some books of narrative based on Bible characters and others based on plots not specifically related to the Bible. Do you feel a difference when writing one or the other?*

The difference in the market you are writing for does have an effect on what and how you write. As a professional writer, you always write for an audience. In my case, I often write books that hopefully will be published by a Seventh-day Adventist publisher and that will be sold in Adventist Book Centers and other Christian bookstores. I know that people who buy books in those markets have certain expectations. So even though I like to probe questions about faith and about the Bible in my writing, I understand that depending on the market you are writing for, there is a boundary beyond which you do not want to push those questions. Within those parameters, I write differently when thinking of an Adventist or a non-Adventist audience.

■ *As Seventh-day Adventists, we are mission-oriented. We live for mission. No matter what we do, we are supposed to be missionaries. How do you relate what you do to the mission of the church? Do you feel you are somehow making a contribution?*

It is an interesting question. Those of us who write for Adventist publish-

ing houses must be aware that we are preaching to the choir. That is not necessarily wrong. I think it is good to write books for Adventist readers, portraying our values and our beliefs in a positive way. As well, I think almost everything our publishing houses produce follows this goal: they are books written by Adventists to be consumed by Adventists, to perhaps strengthen, or challenge, or build up their faith. But often it does not reach beyond those walls. When you write for a general public, however, you need to know that you are writing for a mostly very secular audience. In this context, what I feel I can do with the gifts I have is to raise interesting questions about faith and hopefully portray people of faith in a positive way in a world that is often very dismissive. This may not be the same as taking people to a prophecy seminar, but it implies touching a market that the Seventh-day Adventist Church often does not touch at all. At least in North America, most people with a literary education may never attend a prophecy seminar. They are not interested in most of what we as Adventists have to say. While my books for secular audiences may rarely prompt anyone to run to the church pew on Sabbath morning, in all of them I try to portray faith as a part of life to be taken seriously. Perhaps at this time, I should say that my elementary and high school education gave a strong foundation for living my faith in a secular world. Although the school was owned and operated by Adventists, the majority of enrollment was non-Adventist, and this gave me a perfect environment: a challenge to live my faith and an opportunity to understand the lifestyle of my non-Adventist friends and witness to them as opportunity arose.

■ *Can you give us an example of how you portray faith as an important part of life?*

Certainly. In my new book being

published this fall (*The Forgetful Shore*, by Breakwater Books), for the first time I write specifically about the Seventh-day Adventist Church, even though it is a book intended for secular audiences. The story is set in a region in Newfoundland at the time of the First World War. Before writing, I did a lot of research, reading the local newspaper reports of that decade, and I discovered that at that time, the media were quite friendly to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They were even given chunks of the front page to report what was being said at Adventist meetings. The thing is, many Adventists of the 1910s were using the events of the day to proclaim the soon coming of Jesus. So in this book, one of my characters is a young woman of that time who, disenchanted with what life has to offer, starts attending Adventist meetings and becomes very interested in being part of the Adventist Church for a time. I portray that in a way that is respectful, but also questioning. As the war ends, this young lady, who has learned to love the Sabbath, keeps nevertheless wondering whether Jesus is coming during her lifetime. I too grapple with similar questions, so I enjoyed probing those questions in this last book. I guess what I try to do as an insider is see our church the way other people see us.

■ *You said that after reading your books, you want secular people to start asking questions. What kind of questions?*

Well, I want them to start wondering about the role of faith and God in everyday life. In everything I write, I am fascinated with the concept of God's grace and how it comes through to us in our lives. So I guess the best I could hope for any of my books, especially for the ones marketed outside the Seventh-day Adventist Church, is that someone who is very skeptical and cynical about religion might read

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PROFILE



Hannu Takkula

Dialogue with an Adventist member of the European Parliament

Interview by Kalervo Aromäki

Hannu Takkula is a member of the European Parliament, the most powerful legislative institution of the European Union. The Union is comprised of 27 member states, and each of them has a representation in the Parliament. Takkula is one of the 13 members who represent Finland.

Takkula grew up in a traditional Christian home with a strong Christian upbringing. His family belonged to Laestadianism, a revivalist movement within the Lutheran Church. When he was 15 years old, the family was excommunicated from his church because he competed in sports and his father, as the headmaster, allowed TV to be watched at school. In addition, he and his siblings were studying classical music, something considered unsuitable by the Laestadians.

After this emotional shock and disappointment, Takkula pulled completely away from the Laestadians. Soon after, he established a rock'n'roll band and fully immersed himself in its activities, slowly drifting away from his family and its traditions. For the next two years he lived in this rock'n'roll dream. His parents were beginning to worry and were scared of the change in his life. His father wanted him to get back on track, and the first thing he wanted to do was to find a good Christian school for Hannu. He did his research and came up with a Seventh-day Adventist school in Toivonlinna. Although he knew very little about Adventists or the school, Hannu

agreed to go to Toivonlinna because, as he says, “the school was located in southern Finland, far away from my family in the north. Secondly, I was thrilled that the school was accepting my previous credits and letting me continue my high school studies.” Eventually he became an Adventist, and today he is one of Finland’s leading citizens and a parliamentarian.

Hannu Takkula is married to Anne, a school teacher in Turku. The couple has two sons. The older son studies at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, and is a musician, pianist, and singer. The younger son is pursuing a bachelor’s degree in business at Avondale College in Australia. The family has two places of residence: one in Turku, Finland, and one in Brussels, Belgium.

■ *Tell us briefly about your present responsibilities.*

In the European Union Parliament, I serve as a member and coordinator of the Committee on Culture and Education. My responsibilities have to do mostly with educational and cultural issues. I am also a substitute member on the Committee on Industry, Research, and Energy, where I mostly concentrate on research and innovation issues. The European Parliament can be compared with the United States Congress. We, the MEPs, represent our home countries as the members of the House of Representatives represent their district/region. In the European Parliament, our decision-making influences the

whole of Europe. Our parliamentary term is five years.

■ *What kind of influence has a religious upbringing had on your life?*

Naturally, school and religion have had a great impact on my life and still do. I believe that education enables a better life. I also think that a religious upbringing can give a profound meaning to life and help one to maintain a strength of character and purpose. When I look back, these two factors – education and Christian upbringing – have been the primary influences on my decisions and choices. All in all, I think that the Christian persuasion has led me to where I am now.

■ *How did you become interested in politics?*

Perhaps my early childhood and family had much to do with it. My father was actively involved in social and regional politics at the communal council. We often discussed social issues at home. Both my mother and father are teachers, and thus educational issues were discussed at home. So I could say that because of the environment I was raised in, I became interested in politics. During my studies, I took part in student union activities, which contributed to my later involvement in politics. To my surprise, I was elected to the Finnish Parliament from the Lapland electoral district in 1995.

■ *When you think back, what have these years given you?*

To be elected to the Finnish Parliament at the age of 31 is a life-changing experience. I felt serving in the Parliament was a religious vocation. During the 10 years in the Finnish Parliament, I was closely involved in drafting national legislation. I was the Finnish representative in the Council of Europe and in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In addition, I often attended the United Nations

assemblies within the Finnish delegation. As a result, my worldview expanded. Of course, it was very motivating and satisfying to be part of national lawmaking. Moreover, I had a chance to be part of enacting legislation as a member of Finland's ruling party.

Educational and cultural issues were under my political responsibility in the Finnish Parliament. My other responsibility was development co-operation, in which I was very active. In 2004 I was elected to the European Parliament. I resigned my seat at the Finnish Parliament, since, according to the Finnish legislation, it is not legal to have two parliamentary seats at the same time. Thus, I joined the European Parliament and have been working here for the last six years. Working here has been very interesting, and I have been able to meet world leaders in high-level positions. Furthermore, I have had a chance to develop Europe-wide legislation, especially in the fields of education and culture. Other policy domains are also important, and in the last few years, one of the top priorities has been human rights issues.

Overall, my time spent at the two Parliaments – national and European – has been rewarding. My current mandate lasts until 2014, when the new election will be held. I haven't decided yet whether I will stand as a candidate.

■ *Now you are in Brussels. How do you see the challenges for the Seventh-day Adventist Church?*

In my opinion, the Adventist Church needs to adopt an open attitude toward political decision-making and try to have an active role, because politics is about taking care of mutual interests. It is also important that the views and opinions of the Church are known in the field of politics. From the European standpoint, the situation is such that the Catholic Church is very active, whereas the other

free-church movements, such as the Adventist Church, have been withdrawn. It might be because the concentration has been on building the congregation, and thus the political aspect has not been the top priority. In my opinion, it would be important to be actively involved in society. This does not mean that the time spent on political and social activities should reduce the time spent on spiritual work. However, it would be important to inform legislators about the Adventist Church's values and ideals.

Concerning current European policy, communication of the Church's values is as essential as those of the Catholics, particularly as the Parliament members put forward initiatives on the Sunday law in Parliament. Parliament's processing has not yet had any results because there has not been a majority of the deputies supporting the initiative. In fact, I do not know if they will ever get the majority. Nevertheless, the Catholics promote their faith and their values. I have been waiting to hear, for example, the Adventist and Jewish opinions on the Sabbath. Legislators should know whether different religious communities and their values are equally taken into consideration in law-making.

■ *What do you bring to Brussels that you think matters?*

This is a challenging question to answer. I wish to bring hope and a positive view into the political decision-making and law-making process. I think that during the last few years, we have been in the middle of a crisis, and politics has been only about controlling which direction we drift in. Decisive aims have, more or less, been lost. Perhaps this kind of liberalism that permits everything has become too powerful in politics.

I wish that I could bring to attention issues that really impact humanity and people. I want to defend people as human beings, especially

humans who are disadvantaged and need special attention and security. One concrete issue that I have been part of implementing is a seminar on human trafficking. Two of the speakers in this seminar were Adventists – you, of course, from Finland and Pastor Wintley Phipps from the U.S.A. Pastor Janos Kovacs-Biro was also involved in the organization of the seminar. This seminar was the start of a series of seminars through which we hope to attract members of the Parliament and the media to discuss current issues. Right now I feel a strong pull toward issues that are connected with human rights and religious freedom. Now is the time to work for the disadvantaged so that they have an opportunity for security and human life. I believe this matters.

■ *How does faith affect the work you do?*

Faith serves as a base in all my decision-making. It also gives me an ethical background for issues, decisions, and policies that touch upon human life in general. All in all, faith influences my way of thinking — sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly.

■ *What counsel would you have for a young person who seeks a political career?*

It is important that different kinds of people are involved in decision-making. We need people of various ages, including young people, in politics. I also believe that we all need to carry on our civic responsibilities. Being part of politics and law-making is one way to develop society toward a value base in which Christian values are well presented. I want to encourage young people to participate in political decision-making and openly express their beliefs.

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Trudi Morgan-Cole

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a book of mine and may be steered to think about God and the possibility of seeing life in a new light. In my work as a teacher, I see that many of my students are very cynical about the church they grew up in – whatever church it was – and about organized religions in general. So in my writing – and I hope in my life – I try to say, “There are also really intelligent and sincere people who take this very seriously and who seriously believe in God. And yes, we are flawed and fallible, but it does not mean that God is not real.”

■ *Who are some of your favorite authors?*

To name a few: among Adventist authors I like June Strong and Penny Wheeler, the best storytellers our church has produced. Among non-Adventist writers, I like Canadian author Margaret Laurence, a brilliant novelist with great insight into the human spirit; contemporary American novelist Marilynne Robinson, whose novels are infused with a very rich view of spirituality and faith; and British novelist Sharon Kay Penman, who has a gift for bringing history to life like no other author I know. I could mention many more, but I had better stop here.

■ *Talking about novels, how do you view Ellen White’s concept on novels?*

This is too large and complex a subject to talk about in a short interview such as this. However, the problem is not so much what Ellen White has said about novels, but what some of her “interpreters” have made out of what she has said. On the whole, Ellen White is balanced in her views.

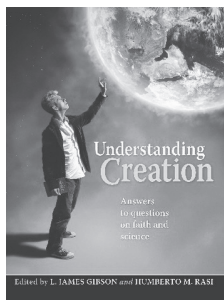
■ *What advice would you give to a young Seventh-day Adventist who feels he*

or she has the gift for writing the kind of literary works you write?

My advice for any young writer is to read as much as possible and to write as much as possible. And not to give up, because writing – and especially writing for publication – can be a very discouraging process. Also, anyone who decides to write has to find his or her own voice and figure out what to say and to whom to say it. For some people, this may mean writing for the church, in Adventist magazines and periodicals. But I think there is a tremendous need – not only in writing but also in all the arts – for Adventists to be able to engage the real world. As a church, we need more people who are able to relate to the world in ways other than through evangelistic efforts. There is a need for more Adventist writers to relate to the world the same way an Adventist engineer or plumber does, and to be able, through their craft, to explore our unique view of the world.

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BOOKS



Understanding Creation: Answers to Questions on Faith and Science

*Edited by L. James Gibson and
Humberto M. Rasi (Nampa, Idaho:
Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2011, 224
pages, hardback).*

Reviewed by Joe Galusha

Understanding Creation: Answers to Questions on Faith and Science, recently published by Pacific Press, will stand the test of time. It addresses important questions being asked by scholars, students of science and religion, and the public-at-large about where things come from. The editors, L. James Gibson and Humberto M. Rasi, have done a masterful job of keeping the 20 chapters by 20 different authors in a similar style and length. In fact, a significant reason the book will be read carefully and appreciated by many is that it is designed to be easy on the eyes and naturally absorbed.

Initial observations

This is a book of essays, and there are very few figures or tables included. At first, my scientific perspective led me to expect this would be a deficiency, but as I continued to read, this fact clearly became a strength. I was regularly drawn to larger questions and considerations that could not be answered or summarized in charts. Details are common but do not detract from the main themes of each chapter.

Another positive feature is that at the end of each chapter there is a paragraph or two that serves as an explicit, succinct conclusion. This alone makes the book readily accessible to non-technical readers and aids for understanding of the sometimes very complicated topics.

Finally, I really liked the expanded biographical sketch for each of the authors. It was nice and helpful to know something about them, and it also lent credence to what was presented in each article.

Now to the content of the book itself

I thought the editors chose a good place to start: “For 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 we are without excuse” (Romans 1:20, NIV, and p. 8). They also identify the shared assumptions of the contributors: “...that the biblical record contained in the book of Genesis is an essential component of Christian doctrine, that Christian faith and empirical science can work fruitfully together, that

there is a basic difference between data and interpretation, and that our comprehension of truth is progressive” (p. 9).

I have always liked the writing and presentations of Humberto Rasi. His introductory chapter, “Why do different scientists interpret reality differently,” lays the groundwork for the rest of the book. His several-page summary of key concepts and their exhibition in biblical Christianity and secular humanism is laid out in tabular form. This clarity is very helpful prior to a development of the worldview as held by Seventh-day Adventists.

There are several content themes in the book itself that are both broad and specific at the same time. For instance, Gibson, along with Ekkens and Standish (chapters 2, 3, and 5), draws our attention to aspects of the creation activity itself. Regular reference is made to complicated, even unknowable and sometimes miraculous, parts of the creation model. We are reminded that it is not possible to return to an historical miracle and replicate it. By default, we must consider it from a distance. And yet we as Christians have implicit confidence in Christ’s miracles as recorded in the Bible. Furthermore, the time and culture of the audience are important to understand. I found the insight of these chapters to be a very important setting for the next few.

Chapters 8 through 15 provide familiar summaries to most of the questions asked by traditional Adventist creationists for example, when did creation occur (Geim), where did life come from (Javor), how reliable is radiometric dating (Webster), was the flood worldwide (Roth). Having them together in one source is valuable and probably worth more than the list price for the book.

One really interesting chapter is by Roberto Biaggi, in which he addresses a number of creationist misconceptions. I found myself smiling as I was reminded that authentic footprints of humans and dinosaurs are not really found alongside one another in the bedrock of the Paluxy River in Texas and that Adventist creation scientists were the ones who debunked this claim some years ago (misconception 4, p. 135, and Neufeld 1975).’

Secondly, many creationists would hold that the entire fossil record was laid down during the one year of Noah’s flood. I must admit to liking that explanation myself. But in this chapter, Biaggi asserts that we now know that the “record is more complex than a single event could produce.” He continues with explanations involving pre-flood rocks, major aquatic catastrophe, and post-flood rocks. Later in the same chapter, he summarizes the best evidence he can think of for a short-age geological model. I found some of this fresh and especially worthy of further careful study (pp. 136-142).

Next, Clausen and Esperante cover two topics of great interest to the informed creationist believer: dinosaurs and plate tectonics. On both of these topics, the authors conclude with summaries of what is known and a call for considerable

humility about what is not. It is clear that much more study is needed on these topics soon. I applaud the integrity and insight of these two chapters.

I was impressed by the tone of the last several papers. Each deals with a general topic of import to creationism of broad significance. Are there moral implications of evolution (Aagaard), is the theory of evolution scientific (Brand), and how to live without final answers (Burdick) are crucial issues to resolve no matter what perspective one has on creation.

Endthoughts

This book is one of the best creation sources I have read. There is a straightforward honesty and humility about it. The editors have kept the tone of openness and forthrightness consistent throughout. Information is an important purpose of the book but not an end in itself.

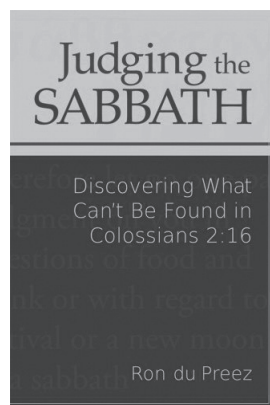
The summary of conclusions the reader will finish with can serve as a safe guide for years to come. I will recommend it to my friends.

As the editors closed their introduction, I conclude these reflections with the ancient prayer:

*From cowardice that shrinks from new truth,
From laziness that is content with half-truths,
From the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth
O God of truth, deliver us!*

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*Barney Neufeld, *Dinosaur Tracks and Giant Men*, *Origins* 2 (1975) 2:64-76.



Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can't Be Found in Colossians 2:16

Ron du Preez (*Berrien Springs:
Andrews University Press, 2008,
189 pages, paperback*).

Reviewed by Joel Musvosvi

Ron du Preez's work is a welcome attempt to tackle one of the difficult and hotly-debated passages in the New

Testament. Both doctrinal and practical, the book is likely to stimulate lively and sometimes passionate responses from a wide range of readers who must either agree or disagree with the author's conclusions.

The first section of the book, comprising nine chapters, provides a comprehensive review of the main issues related to the text. Here the author reviews the history of interpretation of the passage, and examines the usages of *shabbat* in the Hebrew Old Testament and its equivalent in the Septuagint (Greek translation) and the Greek New Testament. His review of one set of linguistic markers for the seventh-day Sabbath and another set of markers for "sabbath" related to other ceremonial festivals in the Old Testament provides a sound and instructive guideline for distinguishing when the occurrence of "Sabbath" in a given text refers to the weekly Sabbath or a ceremonial festival. The use of "Sabbath" with reference to the Day of Atonement, Feast of Trumpets and Sabbatical years is examined. This analysis of biblical usage of "Sabbath" in chapters 2, 3 and 4 is most instructive in establishing a biblical basis for later conclusions.

The book derives its distinctive strength from the author's insistence on examining the biblical text and drawing conclusions based on the biblical text rather than later historical interpretations. He examines every passage in which the word "Sabbath" or its variations appear. Using a large number of well-researched tables, he summarizes his analysis in a way that captures the essential findings of his research. I wish the author had also gone into a more in-depth study and analysis of the words "shadow" (*skia*) and "reality" (*soma*), since these provide an important interpretational key to Colossians 2:16.

The second section of the book takes up some detailed linguistic and structural study of Hosea 2:11 and Colossians 2:16, which are seen as parallel. Identifying six similarities between the two passages, the author argues convincingly that Hosea 2:11 provides a parallel background to Colossians 2:16. Based on this analysis, he argues that the markers in Hosea 2:11 point to festival Sabbaths, and so does Colossians 2:16.

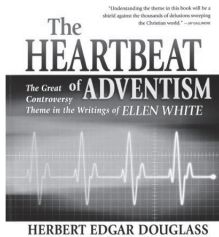
Chapters 12 and 13 explore the literary structures of the two parallel passages. Identifying chiasmic structures in these passages, the author utilizes this as a tool for comparative analysis. Admittedly, these two chapters go beyond the level of non-technical readers. However, they provide the kind of analytical depth which is both fascinating and instructive. These two chapters represent some of du Preez's finest work in the whole section. This alone stamps the book as a scholarly piece of research.

The author also includes four appendices, which provide an invaluable source of information that undergirds the whole work. They serve as a summary of the foundational material that supports the conclusions of the book. He concludes that the Sabbath mentioned in Colossians 2:16 refers

to “ancient Jewish ceremonial sabbaths, and not the weekly Sabbath. Thus, the seventh-day Sabbath of the Decalogue cannot be regarded as abrogated on the basis of Colossians 2:16” (p. 148).

In his approach to the study of this difficult passage, the author sets out not to identify which specific sabbath Paul is talking about in Colossians 2:16. Rather, the author’s goal is to establish that Paul is not speaking about the weekly Sabbath. In so choosing his task, the author has done well and has succeeded in completing his job admirably. To that extent, the author deserves to be commended for his contribution to New Testament scholarship and to the world of religious thought. His book is a “must read” for any serious student of Colossian studies and of the Sabbath debate. It displays keen exegetical skills and a commitment to the authority of Scripture.

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The Heartbeat of Adventism: The Great Controversy Theme in the Writings of Ellen White

Herbert Edgar Douglas (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2010, 414 pages, hardcover).

Reviewed by Reuel U. Almocera

A worldview is as essential to cognitive living as food is to physical being. Worldviews provide fundamental points of reference, a framework of ideas and beliefs by which we interpret and interact with the world. To a large extent, worldviews determine how we live. Hence, books which explore worldviews must be deemed necessary and important.

Herbert Douglas’ *The Heartbeat of Adventism: The Great Controversy Theme in the Writings of Ellen White* belongs to the “worldview” category. In this book, the author, a distinguished scholar, editor and longtime academic administrator, has accurately captured and assembled significant components of Ellen White’s worldview. This should not come as a surprise. Douglas is thoroughly acquainted with Ellen White’s thoughts. He has a lifelong experience of studying her life and works and has published several articles and books on the subject, including the now classic textbooks *The Messenger of the Lord* and *Dramatic Prophecies of Ellen White*.

Although the book cannot be read as a story, it is organized chronologically, following an intricate plot revolving around the concept that a controversy is now raging on earth with the participation of the supernatural. Early on, the author explains the rise of evil, sin, suffering and death (pp. 15-25). Toward the end, he explains how good will triumph over evil and how evil will be finally vanquished.

The book begins with the assertion that this great controversy is historically documented as the grand theme of the Bible. What is even more startling is the concept that this controversy “enters into every phase of human experience” (p. 11), and that each individual will eventually decide on which side of the controversy he or she will be found. Throughout the book, Douglas expertly collates a compendium of 1,560 quotations organized around 21 theological concepts related to the great controversy theme. This includes how the conflict impacted humankind made in the image of God, the real issues in the great controversy, the “plan of salvation,” and how the issues will be settled with finality in the end.

This book is significant not only for its theological value. It is also outstanding for its devotional flavor. Beyond the great controversy theme, aptly illustrated throughout the volume, the reader is introduced to the real God of the Bible. Many wonder whether a loving God can exist in a controversy drama that pictures a violent destruction of evil at the end of time. This volume will convince the reader that indeed God is a God of love. He/she will be drawn to this God and love Him even more as he/she reads this volume.

Since the book is a compilation, navigating through it may be bumpy at times. Ideas may not appear smoothly connected, but the carefully-worded subheadings and the bold emphasis within quotations help the reader grasp the flow of thoughts desired by the compiler.

The discussion on how to read and interpret Ellen White’s writings and the counsel on how to preach the great controversy theme in the pulpit add value to the book. In addition, the comprehensive index makes this book not only practical but even friendly.

The book is strikingly relevant to postmodern minds. In these times, when we are bombarded with many theories and questions on life-and-death issues, this book is a welcome respite. No wonder Adventists who have been influenced by the great controversy meta-narrative provided by Ellen White’s writings have truly become a people of hope.

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LOGOS

Catastrophe and the Creator

Learning to trust
in the midst of the storm

by Sandra Blackmer

Rabbi Harold Kushner in his book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* writes: “There is only one question that really matters: Why do bad things happen to good people? All other theological conversation is intellectually diverting.... Virtually every meaningful conversation I have ever had with people on the subject of God and religion has either started with this question, or gotten around to it before long.... They are all troubled by the unfair distribution of suffering in the world.

“The misfortunes of good people are not only a problem to the people who suffer and their families. They are a problem to everyone who wants to believe in a just and fair and livable world. They inevitably raise questions about the goodness, the kindness, even the existence of God.”¹

Rabbi Kushner isn't the only person asking this question. Many of us struggle to correlate catastrophe and the Creator – and perhaps never more frequently than now. Throughout the last decade we have been continuously bombarded with tragic news. Images of unimaginable suffering and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people because of war, hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, and tornadoes flash on the TV screen and sometimes overwhelm us to the point of being unable to bear viewing them anymore.

During the years I've worked for

the *Adventist Review*, the editors have covered numerous stories of tragedies among Adventists. They include:

- The sinking of a boat in Bangladesh that was carrying 22 children from an Adventist elementary school; 20 of the children survived, but two drowned in the river.
- The death of four Georgia-Cumberland Conference administrators and an Adventist pilot when their plane crashed shortly after takeoff near Chattanooga, Tennessee.
- The loss of Adventist mission pilot Robert Norton, a volunteer for Adventist Medical Aviation (AMA) in Venezuela, and five passengers (including two children) when their plane went missing in Venezuela. Although volunteers searched long for the plane, it is yet to be found.
- The murder of a Northern Caribbean University student just hours after more than 10,000 Adventists marched against violence through the streets of Kingston, Jamaica.
- The murder of a young student missionary and Southern Adventist University student, while she was serving as a teacher on the island of Yap.

Amid all these tragedies, the uninvited question that inevitably plagues

the thoughts is, Why? There are no ready answers available – at least while we're here on this earth – but we ponder the dilemma nonetheless.

In 2009 I worked on a cover story about factory farming based on an interview with Loma Linda University professor Sigve Tonstad. The article addressed the issue of human antibiotic resistance – a consequence of the massive amounts of antibiotics being fed to factory farm animals as growth enhancers – as well as the horrendous living conditions and inhumane treatment of the animals. Tonstad's position centered on biblical principles of stewardship and on the seventh-day Sabbath and its meanings. It was a very difficult topic to research, write about, and find pictures for. I learned things I wished were not true. It made the world seem a much darker place. And even though the experience left me with a longing to do something about it, I also grappled with a feeling of helplessness as I questioned whether anything I personally could do really would make any difference. And this situation can seem small compared to the incalculable, atrocious humanitarian challenges throughout the world.

I do believe that even one person can make a significant difference. Throughout history, evidence abounds that assures us this is so. But when we see evil flourish, with efforts to thwart it having apparently little impact, some people ask, Where is God?

I don't, of course, have the answer to this question, but as I've pondered it I've come to believe that in the end, it all must boil down to trust. I don't mean to sound trite and say that there is always a “silver lining” in every situation or that these occurrences are God's will – because I don't accept those concepts. An enemy hath done this. But I do believe that we must trust in the goodness and the justice and the love of God. Trust that He is in control no matter what the circumstances. Trust that somehow, someday, something good – eventually

– will come out of even the worst that life can deal us.

David, in Psalm 52:8, 9 (NIV), says: “I trust in God’s unfailing love for ever and ever... In your name I will hope, for your name is good.”

And Ellen G. White writes: “God gives us lessons of trust... *Faith grows strong in earnest conflict with doubt and fear.*”²

There is also a short story – one of those old parables with a moral – that is on the lighter side but reflects a similar principle. It’s about a farmer whose horse ran away. His neighbor learned of the situation and came over to commiserate.

“I hear that you lost your horse,” he said. “That is bad news.”

“Well, who knows?” the farmer said. “Maybe it is, and maybe it isn’t.”

The next day the farmer’s horse returned to its stable, but it brought along a drove of wild horses it had befriended. The neighbor came to congratulate him.

“This is so good!” he said.

“Well, who knows,” the farmer replied. “Maybe it is, and maybe it isn’t.”

The next day the farmer’s son decided to ride one of the new wild horses to break it in, but he was thrown from the horse and broke his leg. Upon hearing this sad news, the neighbor again came over to offer condolences.

“This is such a sad thing,” he said.

“Well, who knows,” the farmer responded. “Maybe it is, and maybe it isn’t.”

On the following day soldiers showed up to commandeer an army. They took sons from most of the surrounding farms, but because this farmer’s son had a broken leg, he could not go and was spared.

“Now I know,” the farmer said, “that the running away of my horse was a good thing.”

The moral given for the story is

that until we’ve reached the end of a series of events, it’s hard to know exactly why things happen as they do.

Our lives are a series of events, and though we realize that the ultimate end – when Jesus comes again – will result in victory, we often don’t understand why occurrences in our daily lives happen as they do. What possible good could ever come out of tragedies? We struggle to answer that question.

Yet ultimately, in the end, we don’t have to understand; but we *do* have to trust.

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2. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1948) vol. 4, pp. 116, 117. Emphasis supplied.
3. -----, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1911), p. 519.
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Cultivating trust in God

Trust and faith in God, no matter what the circumstances, don’t just happen automatically or grow spontaneously. As with physical health, a growing faith must be exercised regularly. The “small” choices and decisions we make routinely, the attitude we cultivate under daily stresses and challenges, the time we spend with God fostering a relationship with Him — all these work together to help develop character and to prepare us to prayerfully and successfully deal with calamities that may arise in our lives. The recipe is simple:

- **Bible study and prayer** — Without a continuous, growing relationship with God through prayer and the study of His Word, we have no anchor for the storm. Ellen G. White writes: “Satan well knows that all whom he can lead to neglect prayer and the searching of the Scriptures will be overcome by his attacks. Therefore he invents every possible device to engross the mind!”³ Let nothing rob you of your personal time with God.
- **Practice** — Comparing the growth of faith and trust to learning how to fly a plane, Gina Wahlen in the *Adventist Review*⁴ says that “now is the time to study God’s trustworthy instrument — the Bible — and practice following it through the small storms. When the greatest storm of all time envelops the earth, I want to rely instinctively on God’s Word to direct my course and safely guide me home.”⁴ When everyday challenges arise, call on God for guidance before you act. “Practice” daily dependence on God.
- **Review** — Take time to reflect on how God has led you throughout your life and safely navigated you through difficult situations and circumstances. Remembering how the Lord faithfully kept His promises to you in the past will give you confidence in His unfailing love and care for the present and the future. Even when events didn’t turn out as hoped or expected, consider the ways the Lord blessed you in the midst of adversity. He promises: “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5, NIV), so “trust in the Lord with all your heart... and He shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:5, 6, NKJV).

OPEN FORUM

The needle and the camel

by John M. Fowler

What did Jesus mean when He said that “it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Matthew 19:24, NKJV)?
— A student from India

I am glad that you study the Bible carefully. A thoughtful hour spent in the study of God’s Word will not only enrich one’s spiritual life but also challenge one to think through problems that one confronts in everyday life. Your question refers to one such passage.

In interpreting a biblical passage, we should always keep some hermeneutical rules in mind. In the passage you have referred to, two principles apply: the immediate and the larger context.

The immediate context is the story of a rich man who came to Jesus with a significant question as to what he should do to obtain eternal life. Jesus told him to keep the commandments, to which the man answered that he had been keeping the law from his childhood. Then Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (Matthew 19:21, NKJV). But the rich man left the presence of Jesus without heeding the Master’s prescription for salvation. Out of this sad context comes the passage regarding the camel and the needle’s eye.

What was Jesus saying? The Jews generally thought that “riches” is a sign of God’s special favor. Jesus is destroying that notion by telling the

man that he should sell all that he has and give to the poor in order to lay up treasures in heaven. But does this statement mean that Jesus was saying that one can gain salvation if one gives up all that he has and become poor? No, for that would mean salvation by works. There is nothing virtuous in poverty per se, nor is there anything sinful in riches. What Jesus noted in this man is an attitude: he had exalted his riches to a place where he felt that he had obtained God’s favor of being rich because he had kept the law from his youth. He was pretty sure that he already had salvation, and came to Christ for an endorsement of his present position. But Jesus told him that unless he gives up the idol of works (“I have kept all these from my youth up”) and his smugness that God had rewarded him with richness because he was good, he cannot really find a place in His kingdom. That’s the first lesson that Jesus wanted him to learn – the immediate context.

The larger context is the impossibility of obtaining salvation through one’s own works, and this is a lesson He wanted all His hearers, particularly His disciples, to learn. Hence the saying of the eye of the needle, which astonished the disciples (Matthew 19:25).

What does the eye of the needle mean? Here’s where interpretations come, and these interpretations differ from commentator to commentator. Sometimes interpretations even begin with preachers who want to make things easy and look attractive. But regardless of interpretations, the main point is: the impossibility of salva-

tion through one’s own works or one’s status.

Down through history, many interpretations have arisen:

1. One interpretation focused on a feature of gate architecture common in New Testament times. Even today in some parts of the world, such as in the Middle East and India, a large gate allows entry into a compound or a city wall. During the day, this gate permits entry to many people at one time or to vehicles of large size. But within the large panel of the gate, there is a cutout portion (a gate within a gate) which permits entry for only one person at a time, when the large door is shut at night. A person may even have to crawl into the compound on his or her knees through such a cutout entrance at night. Preachers have taken this common situation and interpreted Jesus’ saying. Obviously, a camel cannot enter this needle. So the preacher arrives at a picture of impossibility – which is the immediate interpretation of what Jesus was saying. While the interpretation may technically be wrong in this instance, the conclusion is correct. The preacher has accomplished his task.

2. Historical evidence indicates that “the eye of the needle” may have been a proverb. Consequently, some preachers suggest that Jesus used a familiar proverb to speak of a greater truth with regard to salvation.

3. Architecture or literature does not indicate that Jerusalem had a small gate called “eye of the needle.” This is borne out in many commentaries, including the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*.

4. The post-Reformation era, when the Bible became freely available, produced an enormous interest in original language study – in Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew, and this has been constantly increasing, leading to revision of common interpretations. This was further accelerated when, in the late 19th and early 20th century, archaeology and study of ancient languages developed significantly. One result of this is to critically view words and their root meanings. One such meaning for the eye of the needle is to let the phrase stand as commonly understood, but look at the word camel, which in its Greek and Aramaic form can mean “a rope” – which cannot enter the eye of a needle. Most modern commentaries use this as their interpretation, which makes good sense.

So what do we do? Keep studying, and never come to the conclusion that all difficulties can be resolved. Indeed, this passage of Jesus is considered by most scholars as one of the difficult sayings of Jesus. But what is important is this: the impossibility of salvation through one’s own works, and the impossibility of entering the kingdom through what one considers to be merits obtained from God as a reward for one’s own goodness.

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International Conference on Emotional Health and Wellness

This multi-disciplinary, multi-cultural conference is hosted by Loma Linda University and the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. It is devoted to advancing a Biblical framework for generating, sustaining, and applying theory, research, and practice in the promotion of emotional health and wholeness. The conference will convene students, practitioners, clergy, administrators and scholars in mental health and religion (and other related fields) to inform and inspire best practices, increase resource accessibility, and develop international collaboration.

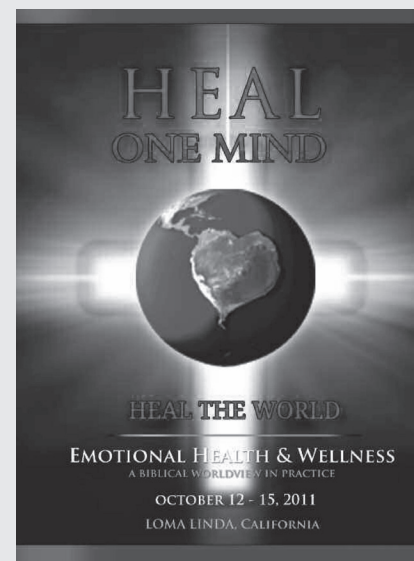
The conference is organized to provide an extensive amount of information. Each day will have a theme that is incorporated into the morning keynote presentation and the afternoon interactive workshops. Topics include education, training, and clinical application in health and ministry settings, all from a theological and biblical worldview. It will combine cutting-edge research and thought with practical application, focusing on an often-neglected aspect of health—that of our emotional and mental well-being.

There will be more than 50 presentations by 60 international experts. Nationally and internationally recognized presenters will deliver keynotes. Interactive workshops, organized by topic or area of service, will provide practical applications and skills in the afternoons.

Specialists will provide clear foundational ideas from Scripture

to apply a biblical worldview in mental health practice. Presenters will discuss and explore evidence-based information, target strategies, and working models, all with a focus on the emotional health and wellness needs of individuals, organizations, and communities. The goal is to help integrate faith into teaching, training, clinical practice, ministry, and organizational mission. The conference venue is at Loma Linda University, U.S.A.

Educators, clinicians, pastors, chaplains, and administrators will find the October 12-15, 2011 conference to be enriching and useful. En Español: All keynote presentations and a number of workshops will be translated into Spanish. For more information and to register online go to www.globalemotionalhealth.com



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Some things never change—such as *Dialogue's* mission and focus. Other things, though, are updated and enhanced—such as new ways in which you can access *Dialogue*. We wanted you to know that *Dialogue* is now available online, in addition to the regular printed format. The journal can be accessed at: dialogue.adventist.org. At the *Dialogue* site, you will have the opportunity **to read all of the articles, from the very beginning of *Dialogue* to the present.** Additionally, you can read the articles in any of the four languages in which *Dialogue* is published.

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Good news! The steady growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its institutions has created a demand for qualified personnel who can support its worldwide mission with their talents and education.

In response to this need, the General Conference has launched the Adventist Professionals' Network (APN)—an electronic global registry of Adventists who hold a degree in any field and have an email address. APN assists Adventist institutions and agencies in locating candidates for positions in areas such as teaching, ministry, health care, management, administration, and research as well as consultants and personnel for mission service.

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Encourage other degreed Adventists to join APN and enjoy its many benefits.

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