

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

DIALOGUE

E n g l i s h • F r e n c h • P o r t u g u e s e • S p a n i s h



**Emotional
intelligence: A biblical
understanding**

**Who should do
theology?**

**Injustice to one,
justice for all**

**Humans and
chimpanzees:
Are they identical?**

2

Volume 23

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CONTENTS

ESSAYS

5 Emotional intelligence: A biblical understanding

Those who are ultimately successful will not only tell each other the truth, but they will also be telling themselves the truth.

by Neil Nedley, M.D.

10 Who should do theology?

Doing theology is a privilege and an ongoing process that may lead those involved to an ever-deeper understanding and greater appreciation of God and salvation and a vibrant relationship with Him.

by Ekkehardt Mueller

14 Injustice to one, justice for all

The greater the injustice suffered by Jesus, the greater His love for us shines through. The darker the night, the brighter His light.

by David Steward

17 Humans and chimpanzees: Are they identical?

Are humans and apes essentially identical? The answer to this question will depend heavily upon the philosophical assumptions one brings to the data.

by Timothy G. Standish

DEPARTMENTS

EDITORIAL

3 Escaping tunnel vision
by John Wesley Taylor V

PROFILE

22 Davide Sciarabba
Interview by Ruben Sanchez-Sabaté

25 Daniel D. Ntanda Nsereko
Interview by Hudson E. Kibuuka

BOOKS

28 *What Jesus Really Meant*
by Richard L. Litke
Reviewed by Sandra Blackmer

29 *Hook, Line and Sinkers:
How to Keep from Swallowing
Popular Myths*
by Heather Marie Thompson
Reviewed by Lorena Finis Mayer

30 *The Body of Christ: A Biblical
Understanding of the Church*
by Reinder Bruinsma

LOGOS

31 The wonder of water:
A challenge to evolution?
by Hugo García

ACTION REPORT

34 Three hundred youth meet in
Paris for AMiCUS convention
by Barna Magyarosi

EDITORIAL

Escaping tunnel vision

It was one of those marvelous spring mornings – blue skies, sunshine, cool breezes. The invitation to escape outdoors became irresistible, and I found myself wandering through an old apple orchard not far from home. Although the trees were weathered and gnarled, their branches that day were covered with delicate blossoms, a gentle aroma wafting through the air.

It was there in the orchard that I spotted it – a meandering ridge of grass, sure evidence of a mole’s network of tunnels. In fact, the little creature was hard at work, just under the surface, prodding a slowly-advancing hump of grass.

Abruptly, and perhaps rather atypically, the grass parted and a small, dusty head popped into view. The little creature looked around, blinked, and then vanished back into its tunnel – as suddenly as it had emerged.

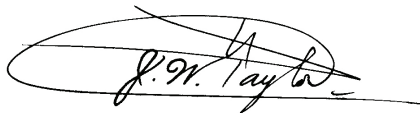
I stood there, looking at that small, ragged hole in the grass. *You poor little mole. There you are – creeping through dark tunnels, bumping into rocks and roots – when here, just above you, a wonderful world awaits you. A world of sunshine and breezes, of color and fragrance, of new perspectives and opportunities.*

Pan to the present. It’s altogether too easy to wander through the familiar corridors of our lives. Doing what we’ve always done. Experiencing again what we’ve already tried. Confined to our comfort zones. Trapped by the routine.

Sometime, though, we must break out of our drab tunnels. We must push away from the familiar. We must explore new terrain, glimpse new horizons. We must extend the envelope of our lives. Through the prophet Isaiah, God urges us, “Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes” (Isaiah 54:2 NIV).

What does this imply? It may mean that you venture beyond the circle of your established friends and connect with someone new, perhaps from a different race, culture, or socioeconomic background. It may mean that you take a few months, or perhaps a year, to serve someplace where there is a special need. If you are studying, it may imply that you take a course or two that’s not required, outside of your major field of study. If you are a professional, it may suggest that you add a new dimension to your career. Whatever your circumstance, it may mean that you experience God in a way you’ve never done before.

To escape tunnel vision – tunnel thinking, tunnel living – is liberating. It opens up new directions, new opportunities, new avenues for service and fulfillment. It’s a part of God’s plan for your life: “Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God’s ideal for His children.” (E.G. White, *Education*, p. 18). Ultimately, it’s your response to His invitation, who has called you out of the darkness and into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).



— John Wesley Taylor V

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LETTERS

Gratitude and commitment

Dear editors,

I was born in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and about 18 months ago I moved to Guadalajara, Mexico, where I am taking a master's degree program in management and policies in higher education in a well-known school in this city.

Before coming to Mexico, I attended several schools in my home country, Peru, even though I never had the opportunity of attending a Seventh-day Adventist school. However, thanks to the Bible and the literature of our church – especially the *University Dialogue* magazine – I have been strengthened in the faith during my years of academic training and my formative years, where I developed my own criteria and set of values.

When I was still living in Peru, I used to get issues of the *University Dialogue* magazine, thanks to my local pastor. Every time he gave me a new issue, I used to read it from cover to cover, and then share it with my classmates and teachers. This missionary project has been a great blessing for my Christian life and Seventh-day Adventist identity.

When I moved to Mexico I brought two issues with me, which I shared here in Guadalajara with two of my

professors. Both of them made the observation that when they visited the website of the magazine to read other issues, the last issue posted was from volume 21 (2009).

I hope there is a way of keeping that website up to date so that the contents of all the issues of the magazine can be shared with many more readers. Those of us who have been reading *University Dialogue* for years feel it is our duty to let other people know about it and explain to them how to read it on the web. I invite you to reflect on this paragraph by Ellen White: “Those who belong to the higher ranks of society are to be sought out with tender affection and brotherly regard. Men in business life, in high positions of trust, men with large inventive faculties and insight, men of genius [...]. To them the invitation must be given” (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 230).*

Teolinda Rosa Gómez Figueredo
Guadalajara, México.

Note from the editors:

Thank you for your kind words of appreciation. We would like you to know that our website is undergoing changes at this moment. Currently, we are working hard in order to update it and correct some errors and omissions.

Old, but current

May God's blessings fill your life and the ministry you are called to do.

I take this opportunity to let you know that I like the articles of *University Dialogue* very much. I have only a few issues, but they have been a great help for me.

I have a very old issue (vol. 6:1, 1994), which includes the article “Are Music Choices Really Important?” Even after almost two decades, the content of this article is still very current and helpful – perhaps more than ever. Thank you for your ministry.

Esteban Chuc Jiménez
via email

Note from the editors:

As the author of this letter states, the article he mentions is still current and very important for us as individuals and for our church at large. We recommend that readers visit the magazine website at <http://dialogue.adventist.org>, where under the subhead “Circulation and Readership” you can click on the “Full Journal” option. Then you can choose vol. 6:1, where on page 9 you will find this specific article. Please visit the website often in order to read many more educational and inspiring articles from old and new issues.

Write to us!

We welcome your comments, reactions and questions, but please limit your letters to 200 words. Write to:

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Letters selected for publication may be edited for clarity and/or space.

Emotional intelligence: A biblical understanding

by Neil Nedley, M.D.

Those who are ultimately successful will not only tell each other the truth, but they will also be telling themselves the truth.

When a group of volunteers was subjected to two sleepless nights, army researchers found that lack of sleep hindered participants' ability to make decisions in the face of emotionally-charged moral dilemmas.¹ Perhaps even more significant was the finding that some volunteers changed their views of what was morally acceptable in a state of sleep deprivation, although this was not universally the case. Volunteers who, at the beginning of the study, scored highly on a measure known as "emotional intelligence" did not waver on what they found morally appropriate.

Do you think you might face an emotionally-charged moral dilemma in your life? Actually, it is quite clear from Scripture and as we look at the world around us, that we will all face such dilemmas in the near future (see Revelation 13:12-17).

The role of emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is not related merely to decision-making. Studies show that while the job you get after college is related to your IQ, how far you advance in that job bears little relationship to IQ.² It is not even related to your grades in school.³ Rather, it is related to your EQ.⁴

Furthermore, your success and happiness in life are more closely associated with EQ than with any other form of intelligence.⁵

In a variety of scientific studies, increasing EQ has been shown to prevent or treat depression, phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, anorexia, bulimia, and addictions such as alcoholism.^{6,7,8} The 12-step program used by Alcoholics Anonymous, for example, has led to remarkable success, but it is *four times more successful* if combined with a program to enhance emotional intelligence.

What about persons who don't necessarily have an addiction or specific disease? Enhancing EQ has been shown to help these individuals think more clearly and communicate more effectively.⁹ It fosters unity in group settings, reduces polarizing statements, and promotes a happier life.¹⁰

Influences on emotional intelligence

Influences on EQ have been well studied in the last 10 years. Our genetic makeup has a small role to play. Our childhood experiences – how we were raised and what types of things happened to us – exert some influence.¹¹ Our current level of

emotional support also plays a role.¹² However, these are not the most influential factors.

The most important influence on EQ is *what we believe*.¹³ This is because our emotions are largely framed by our beliefs – our evaluations of events, the way we think about problems, our silent (or sometimes, not-so-silent!) self-talk. It turns out that your beliefs have much more to do with how you feel than what is actually happening in your life.

Consider an example from the Bible. Paul and Silas were jailed without a fair trial, cruelly beaten, and tossed on a rough dirt floor, with their wrists and feet fastened in stocks (Acts 16:22-24). Do we find them weeping and crying? No, they were singing praises to God. Why? Because their thoughts were more powerful than what was actually happening in their lives.

Popular "psychology" would tell us that if we are in a circumstance like Paul and Silas, we just need to create a fantasy world in our mind. Imagine being on a beach in Hawaii, instead of on that prison floor. If we tried that technique, it would work for about 1.2 seconds! An acute reminder of our circumstances would implode our Hawaiian fantasy. What did have

lasting value for Paul and Silas were beliefs that went beyond their present circumstance to their priorities. And those true and accurate thoughts were so powerful that they could praise God.

The bottom line is that emotional intelligence can be learned. And since emotional intelligence is learned rather than merely inherited, it can be developed. How then can we not only safeguard but also effectively develop emotional intelligence? While there are many principles we might explore,¹⁴ let's illustrate three of these, each through a biblical example.

The case of Saul

The first case of cognitive distortion is well illustrated by the life of Israel's first king. Saul was tall and stunningly handsome (1 Samuel 9:1, 2). He was also wealthy. Although he had these apparent advantages, negative thoughts began to develop in Saul's mind, thoughts that were gross

distortions of reality. On the surface, these thoughts appeared valid, but underneath they represented irrational, twisted thinking.

We know of at least three causes of Saul's mental turmoil. The first cause, and the root of the others, was the cognitive distortion of *magnification and minimization*. In other words, Saul magnified things that were not important and minimized things that were truly significant.

How did Saul minimize? When confronted with his guilt, he blamed others and justified himself. Corrected by God's prophet and asked why he didn't follow divine instruction, Saul began to point out ways that he had followed the Lord's instructions (1 Samuel 5:20, 21). In essence, Saul complained to Samuel, "Why don't you just talk about what I did right? You are focusing on things I didn't do right, which, by the way, aren't such a big deal." His problem was the minimization of his guilt. Ellen

White notes, "If you have made mistakes, you certainly gain a victory if you see these mistakes and regard them as beacons of warning. Thus you turn defeat into victory, disappointing the enemy and honoring your Redeemer."¹⁵

In Saul's case, we find a second problem: *dwelling on the unfairness of his life*. As a result of his guilt, Saul received a sentence, and he thought that the punishment outweighed the crime. Did it? While Samuel was the messenger, the verdict was actually issued by God Himself. So was it unfair? In reality, many people who describe their lives as unfair have actually been treated quite fairly.

Having said that, we should acknowledge that no one is treated fairly 100 percent of the time. But when we dwell upon that unfairness and rehearse it, it will inevitably cause significant emotional problems. Speaking of frustration tolerance, Ellen White says, "We should not allow our peace to be spoiled. However unjustly we may be treated, let not passion arise. By indulging a spirit of retaliation, we injure ourselves. We destroy our own confidence in God, and grieve the Holy Spirit."¹⁶

The third aspect of Saul's distorted thinking, connected to magnification, was an *inordinate self-esteem* (1 Samuel 15:16-19). This inflated self-esteem was also the cause of Nebuchadnezzar's insanity – "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?" (Daniel 4:30) – and of Lucifer's downfall – "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God" (Isaiah 14:13, 14). We can also call it pride, an inflated self-esteem that was easily wounded, in Saul's case, by the people's – and especially the women's – obvious preference for another leader (1 Samuel 18:6-9).

Contrast Saul's attitude with Christ's: "Christ was never elated by applause, nor dejected by censure or disappointment."¹⁷ The first clause is key to the second. If we are not elated

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by applause, if we have humility and not a distorted magnification of self, we will never be depressed by censure or disappointment.

The Bible reminds us, “Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves” (Philippians 2:3). “Lowliness of mind” doesn’t mean that you have a low sense of self-worth. We recognize that Christ would have died for just one soul, and that means we are of infinite value. But infinity is not greater than infinity. When we suddenly think that we are more valuable than the one sitting next to us, for whom Christ also died, we have crossed the line into arrogance and pride.

Saul underwent a recommended therapy for depression, and he felt better again for a while (1 Samuel 16:23). However, in time, with the three causes still active, and the third cause, wounded pride, becoming even more prominent, Saul slipped back into deeper anxiety and darker depression. Although a man with wonderful potential, he continued to live a selfish life, never completely trusting and obeying God, and never giving up his pride for more than a few days. Finally, under tremendous stress and with his enemies closing in, Saul’s sad life ended in suicide.

The case of Solomon

CNN recently carried a report that said, in essence: The next time you are deciding between ice cream and cake, buying a car or taking a trip to Europe, accepting a new job or keeping your old one, you should remember two things. First, your decision is rooted in the desire to become happy, or at least happier than you are now. Second, there’s a good chance the decision you make will be wrong.¹⁸

This takes us to the second cognitive distortion: *emotional reasoning*. Emotional reasoning goes like this: “I feel like a failure, therefore, I am a failure. I feel overwhelmed and help-

less, thus my problems are impossible to solve. I feel like I’m on top of the world, therefore I am invincible. I am angry at you, and that proves that you’ve been cruel and insensitive to me.” One of the reasons why people get into the cycle of addiction is due to this type of emotional reasoning.

Depression is an epidemic in our society.^{19,20} Like Solomon, we tend to think that the more fun things we have and do, the less depression we may feel. The wise man wrote: “I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure... And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy” (Ecclesiastes 2:1, 10). If pleasurable things could prevent or treat depression, we should see the lowest levels of depression. But that’s not the case.

Most of the “fun things” in which people participate may spike the dopamine levels in our brains, creating a sense of pleasure. They also result in a subsequent dramatic drop, far below neutral. Furthermore, the more we do these things, the less they spike. Pretty soon, when we engage in our addiction of choice, it barely takes us up to neutral. In the in-between times, we feel a deep, overwhelming sense of sadness.

Solomon, for example, became involved in a life of extreme pleasure. It initially spiked his dopamine levels, but as this cycle was repeated, he says, “Therefore I hated life... for all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair” (Ecclesiastes 2:17, 20). Randomized controlled studies show that after exposure to pornography for six weeks, both men and women were less attracted to their partner if they had one, were more self-absorbed, and evidenced less empathy for others around them.²¹ In essence, they began to live in a very self-centered world and began to shut down emotionally.

Ellen White states, “Many envied the popularity and abundant glory of

Solomon, thinking that of all men he must be the most happy.”²² He had the most power, wealth, women, fame, and possessions. His contemporaries perhaps thought he was the happiest man. But Ellen White has this to say: “All the splendor about him is but to him mockery of the distress and anguish of his thoughts as he reviews his misspent life in seeking for happiness through indulgence and selfish gratification of every desire. By his own bitter experience, Solomon learned the emptiness of a life that seeks in earthly things its highest good. Gloomy and soul-harassing thoughts troubled him night and day. For him there was no longer any joy of life or peace of mind, and the future was dark with despair.”²³

One of the salient characteristics of virtually all depressed individuals, no matter what the underlying cause, is a significant decrease in the blood flow and activity of the frontal lobe of the brain.^{24,25} As we go against our conscience, frontal lobe function decreases. And when we repeatedly do so, the decline becomes dramatic. That is where Solomon was.

The wisest man on earth became the most depressed. He felt that he had nothing to look forward to, that all was vanity and vexation. But in his deep depression, as a result of a prophet coming to him and giving him counsel, Solomon turned his life around. And if Solomon’s dissipated life could be redirected, there’s hope for every one of us. We can each get on the pathway of Solomon’s recovery – listening to the words of the prophet, changing our lifestyle, and altering the way we feel in authentic, effective ways.

James wrote, “No one should say God tempts, because God doesn’t tempt anyone. Each one is tempted when he is dragged away and enticed by his own desires” (James 1:13, 14). The problem is, feelings can lie! When we experience feelings, we need to elevate them to our level of consciousness

and evaluate whether they are based on truth or on distortions.

The world offers a false way of altering the way we feel – whether it is gambling, pornography, alcohol, drugs, or even a chocolate binge. The problem is that we can never get enough of what we don't need. There are things we do need, and that we can have enough of – we can get enough vitamin D, we can get enough broccoli, we can get enough sleep, we can get enough exercise. But we can never get enough of what we don't need, because what we don't need will never satisfy us! Our life choices must be made on the basis of what is true and in harmony with God's plan for our lives.

The case of Elijah

The last example is a short one. "But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers!" (1 Kings 19:4). Did Elijah have a sense of inflated pride, like Saul? No, Elijah was a humble man. Was Elijah, like Solomon, engaging in a self-indulgent lifestyle to try to gain happiness? No, Elijah lived a simple life. Yet Elijah suffered from significant depression.

This highlights the fact that when we are having emotional problems, we need to find the precise cause, as it's not the same for everyone. Here is Elijah, a man who had always followed God's will. He had just experienced God's miraculous intervention on Mount Carmel. Yet within a day, someone informed him that he was about to lose his life, and Elijah panicked. Did Elijah have reason to fear Jezebel? He did, because she had killed all of the other prophets of the Lord! But instead of waiting upon God, Elijah turned and ran. Thirty days later, Elijah was so depressed that he wanted to die.

God had to put Elijah on a depression-recovery program. Like many depressed people, Elijah wanted to be in the dark, in the cave. God had to send an earthquake and a whirlwind to get him out of the cave and into the light. After all of those things, however, God turned to what was most important to Elijah's recovery. God spoke and provided cognitive behavioral therapy to correct Elijah's distorted thoughts.

Elijah's distortion was *overgeneralization* – generalizing from too few instances. It is holding the hypothesis as a fact, rather than merely a hypothesis. High IQ people have a tendency to do that. Because they are able to readily generalize, they have a tendency to overgeneralize. What was Elijah's overgeneralization? "I am the only one who has not bowed down to Baal." The Lord let him get by with it the first time. But then Elijah repeated it, and the Lord couldn't let him continue any longer in his self-destructive overgeneralization. "Elijah," God said, "there are 7,000 others who haven't bowed to Baal." What Elijah should have said is, "Lord, I'm the only one I know of," but instead he just *knew* he was the only one.

To help Elijah overcome his depression, God gave him a set of specific tasks to do – none of which, by the way, were activities that Elijah really wanted to do (1 Kings 19:15, 16). But Elijah did follow through on what the Lord asked him to do. Did Elijah recover? Not only did he recover, but also he was translated to heaven without seeing death (2 Kings 2:11).

Set free

The Psalmist says, "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Your holy hill?" (Psalm 15:1). In essence, David is asking the question, "Who is going to be ultimately successful in life?" The answer is given, "He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart" (Psalm 15:2). It is

this third phrase that is of particular interest.

The Ten Commandments talk about telling each other the truth. Those who are ultimately successful, however, will not only tell each other the truth, but they will be telling *themselves* the truth. And isn't that really what we have to do in order to be accurate in telling others the truth? To speak the truth to others, we must first have thoughts of ourselves that are accurate and true.

Ellen White observes, "Even the thoughts must be brought into subjection to the will of God, and the feelings under the control of reason and religion. Our imagination was not given us to be allowed to run riot and have its own way, without any effort at restraint and discipline. If the thoughts are wrong, the feelings will be wrong; and the thoughts and feelings combined make up the moral character."²⁶

Whenever there is a moral failure, it starts with a distorted thought. David, in his psalm of repentance, writes, "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom" (Psalm 51:6).

When David committed that disastrous act with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:2), instead of reminding himself of what was true and right and turning away from sin, he continued to focus on the stimulating event. He became involved in emotion-based reasoning, magnification, overgeneralization, and perhaps even inflated self-esteem, believing that he, as king, was above the law. Then he acted upon those distortions. Every sin that is committed begins with a distorted thought.

But the good news is that we are positively transformed by reconstructing our thinking. Paul says, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). We not only have to recognize distorted thoughts, but we must correct them and replace them with true and accurate thoughts

– thoughts that find their source in God.

How, then, can emotional intelligence be safeguarded and improved? By avoiding cognitive distortions – self-magnification, emotion-based reasoning, overgeneralization, and others.²⁷ By filling our minds with accurate and true thoughts, thoughts derived from an understanding of God’s plan for our lives. Then, as Christ said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

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Who should do theology?

by Ekkehardt Mueller

Doing theology is a privilege and an ongoing process that may lead those involved to an ever-deeper understanding and greater appreciation of God and salvation and a vibrant relationship with Him.

Who should do theology? Before we discuss this important question, we should define theology. A simple definition states that theology is “teaching about God and his relation to the world from creation to the consummation, particularly as it is set forth in an ordered, coherent manner.”¹ Having said this, in order to gain knowledge about God and enter into a relationship with Him, it is necessary to be engaged in theological thinking, that is, to look at and study what God has revealed to humanity. Doing theology is a privilege and an ongoing process that may lead those involved to an ever-deeper understanding and greater appreciation of God and salvation and a vibrant relationship with Him. Ideally, theological thinking is not done in isolation, but all believers are involved in this process, even though the church has employed specialists, who have been trained in theology and biblical studies.

The problem of doing theology

Yet it is no secret that theology – whether done by church members, church administrators, or professional theologians/scholars – has the potential to create tensions. It may even be divisive. Doing theology and coming to certain convictions on which one acts may fracture human relationships, bring about disunity, and polarize or even split churches and society.

This can be substantiated by a look at history and our present world situation. The Arian controversy in the fourth century A.D. dealing with the divinity of Christ and the Trinity, left victors and losers. The birth of Protestantism came about by a return to Scripture and an intense seeking for God, leading to a breakaway from the Catholic Church. The Anabaptists disagreed on certain doctrines with the Roman Church, as well as with Protestantism, and were persecuted by both groups. Acting on theological convictions has fragmented Christianity into numerous denominations.

Even in the New Testament, one finds theological tensions. Following the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), conflict arose between some groups clinging to the Mosaic law and others teaching that Gentile Christians are not generally bound by that law. Behind the debated issue loomed the larger one: namely, salvation by faith in Christ or salvation through the observation of the law (Galatians 2-5). This conflict helped the church to define more clearly its biblical position. However, the outcome was not always positive. “Disputes as to meanings quickly gave rise to separations and schisms within the Christian community. This is already apparent in the books of the New Testament, especially the epistles, in which theo-

logical argumentation is deployed in order to distinguish between truth and error...”² For instance, the Johannine letters inform us about different perceptions of who Jesus was and the battle of the apostle for the full humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ (see 1 John 2 and 4; 2 John). In this case, theology had become divisive, but the apostles did not pull back in order to please the opponents and strike a compromise. Heresy had to be confronted by theology, even if it meant that false positions had to be exposed and a split of the church might possibly follow.

Today, there are enormous tensions between and within world religions, including each of the three monotheistic religions: Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. Even within most of their denominations, these tensions are manifest and can erupt in strange decisions or even violent acts against those who hold different theological positions. For instance, Pope Benedict XVI’s decision to readmit to the official Roman Catholic Church, among others, the ultraconservative bishop Richard Williamson, who denies the extent of the Holocaust, has not only complicated the church’s relations with Jews and caused criticism from leading figures in the arena of politics, but also led people to leave the Catholic Church in disappointment.

In addition, W. Jeanrond points to the spectrum of current theological methods and asks the question: "Can there be any claim to unity when there is no unified framework of communication?"³

Andrew Linzey points out other dangers associated with doing theology: theology, which is a human enterprise, may not only claim too little, at times it may also claim too much, such as theological fundamentalism which "absolutizes human agency, authority, or creed above that of God."⁴ Another danger is parochialism. Although theology should serve the needs of the church, service must not become servility. Service slides into servility "if it becomes bound to the maintenance of religious or Christian positions per se rather than to seeking out God's truth."⁵

Options for doing theology

If doing theology is problematic and even divisive, how should we relate to it? There are a number of options:

1. Refrain from doing theology, and get involved in a kind of spirituality that avoids doctrinal concerns or in practical issues such as mission outreach, humanitarian aid, or care for the ecosystem.
2. Give theologians free rein.⁶ Assign doing theology to the specialists only and allow them to use whatever hermeneutical approach they see fit.
3. Allow leadership of the church to make decisions by using administrative processes with little or no theological input.
4. Encourage varied groups of church members to become involved in studying the Scripture and doing theology. Keep a balanced approach in which all are listened to, and ensure that decision-making is not left to only a few individuals.

The advantage of the first option

is that something is being done and Christianity is kept down-to-earth. People do not get stuck in never-ending debates about non-essential theological minutia. The disadvantage of this approach is that spirituality and practice may not have a solid biblical foundation and that what is being proclaimed and/or experienced deteriorates into emotionalism, traditionalism, relativism, or pragmatism and falls short of being the biblical message. How can believers stop thinking about God and studying His Word, which helps them fine-tune their involvement with humanity, evaluate their methods and the outcome of their labor, and gain new insights?

The advantage of the second option is that trained specialists are dealing with important theological concepts. They are aware of the challenges posed by culture, the biblical material, and the various interpretations or theological positions on the subject matter, and they can deal with the issues in a responsible way. Some would regard it as an advantage that average church members and administrators would not have to get involved in the interpretation of Scripture and in theological thinking in a deeper way. But such a stand turns out to be a great loss and disadvantage. Accepting option two would hand over to theologians and biblical scholars the sole responsibility for doing theology and rob God's people of exercising their divinely-given privilege as a universal priesthood of believers to share in the wonderful task of doing theology. Although theologians and biblical scholars are trained in their fields, they are neither infallible nor free from the temptations to follow current theological fashions, to submit to the majority view in the scholarly world, or to subscribe to philosophical presuppositions for studying Scripture that are questionable from a biblical perspective.

Option three asks church administrators to make decisions without

theological input from others; i.e., to make decisions on pragmatic rather than theological bases. The advantage of this approach resembles the advantage of option one. It may even seem to be an effective approach. Decisions can be made quickly. Administrators may be able to stem the tide of heresy with which the church is always wrestling. But the price is quite high.⁷ Although it may be a fast process, the results may not stand the test of time and may even lead in a wrong direction and not be owned by the church.

Such an approach may be an attempt to tame theology. But who says that church administrators are automatically right, while the church's theologians are automatically wrong and must be treated with suspicion? If important decisions are made without the input of the theologians and scholars of the church, the danger is that sooner or later decisions will no longer be based on biblical teachings, and the church will become a business enterprise, with the president mutating into a CEO. Secular methods and practices may be used and dissenting opinions may be shunned. Another danger is that administrators might avoid making any decisions on theological matters and opt for a smorgasbord of opinions within the church that could cripple or even hinder the proclamation of the church's message and the carrying out of its mission.

The fourth alternative has the disadvantage that many believers may not be interested in participating in a common theological journey.⁸ In addition, the process is long and more cumbersome, and a mere majority vote may not be the solution to all problems. However, the disadvantages are outweighed by allowing the entire church to get involved, thereby avoiding oligarchic or autocratic church governance. It may also contribute to a feeling of ownership.

Among the options listed here (and there may be more), the fourth seems to be the most desirable one, since it

comes the closest to biblical teachings on the nature of the church. This may also be the traditional position among Adventists. To do no theology can hardly be an option for Adventists. To assign theology to trained personnel is not much better. The same is true of assigning all power to church leadership. If, therefore, we cannot avoid doing theology but nevertheless get involved, the questions are: What is the price? How do we do this in a responsible way, especially since the divisiveness of theology is sometimes necessary and good and sometimes unnecessary and harmful?

The price of doing theology

Doing theology requires:

- The willingness of the individual to get involved in this learning experience.

- Time, prayer, study, living out one's convictions, and some training provided by the Adventist Church through Bible study classes on Sabbath morning, Bible study groups during the week, and various seminars at church and conference levels.

- An individual and a communal approach, because, as Christians, we are not islands, unconnected to others, but part of Christ's body, the church.

- Acceptance of certain paradoxes in Scripture without attempting to solve them: for instance – there is one God, and yet three persons in the Godhead; we are saved and yet not finally saved.

- A willingness to suspend judgment and live with certain questions. For this, humility and modesty are needed.⁹ We do not know everything, not even all that is knowable.

- Acknowledgment that opinions on the interpretation of some biblical passages and theological topics may differ among church members and theologians. This, however, does not call into question fundamental Adventist beliefs. Examples are the interpretation of difficult apocalyptic passages such as Daniel 11 and whether Jesus had Adam's pre-fall nature, post-fall

nature, or a combination of both.

- Recognition that some theological tensions need to be addressed, otherwise they could rise to a serious level that may lead to a fundamental change of the church's position and to open conflict. Examples of such issues are the church's position on creation and the issue of homosexual practice.

To sum up: theological tensions may not necessarily be wrong, if there is a willingness to work them out and find biblical solutions. To have an ongoing theological dialogue is not a sign of a weak or lifeless church.¹⁰ On the contrary, it may suggest healthy engagement with matters of faith. It would be disastrous for administrators to stifle all discussion on theological matters, to forbid questions on the reasons for our positions, or to fail to appreciate the need for better and more comprehensive interpretations of biblical passages and theological teachings, preferring to focus instead solely on practical matters.

However, unnecessary theological conflict may cripple and paralyze the church and produce different factions. As the early church had to fight heresies that went against the Word of God, so should the church of our days be. When confronted with false teachings about major biblical doctrines, Jesus, Paul, and the apostles did not allow for pluralism within the church (Matthew 10:34-36; Galatians 1:8-9). While some discussion on theological matters is normal and healthy, promulgation of outright heresy must be rejected. This is where apologetics as a theological discipline comes in and has its rightful place (Philippians 1:16; 1 Peter 3:15).¹¹ As Gordon R. Lewis writes, "If knowledge is necessary to faith then defense of truth is 'indispensable to Christian outreach.'"¹²

Doing theology and the Adventist church

1. Suggestions of a general nature

The question is not whether or not

there will be theological tensions, but how to deal with them and how to do theology in a responsible way within the Adventist church, avoiding unnecessary tensions. Here are some general suggestions:

- **Stay away from the extremes.**

Just as it is not helpful to stress theology and disregard Christian life, it is equally not helpful to stress practice and downplay theology. "Every so often," writes Roy Adams, "at camp meetings and other gatherings, one can hear demagogic aspersions of theology: 'We don't need theology,' a speaker might say. 'All we need is Jesus!' Uttered with passion and conviction, the comment usually brings choruses of amens, if not also applause."¹³ Such an approach may have a negative effect on church members. Commenting negatively on doing theology may discourage church members from studying Scripture for themselves and thinking about matters of faith, leading them to assume that it is not important. Even a comparison of theology to the "weightier" matters of practical Christian living may send a wrong message. Those interested in theology may continue their studies and distance themselves from those who make negative remarks about theology. This can contribute to a polarization within the church.

- **Do not compartmentalize.** The Bible does not separate sound teaching from the Christian life and walk. The apostles stressed growth in knowledge (Philippians 1:9; Colossians 1:9-10; 2 Peter 3:18) that has cognitive and relational aspects. We need to avoid creating dichotomies between theology and practice or spirituality, doctrines and mission, theologians and administrators, those with formal training in theology and those without formal training. Mutual respect allows people to flourish, feel appreciated, and be creative.

- **Affirm both theology and the Christian life.** The doing of theology is as essential as its practice (mission

outreach, caring relationships, humanitarian assistance, etc.). Theology forms the foundation. Practice builds on this foundation. One without the other will not do. It is true that theology can be wrong and destructive,¹⁴ but so can practical approaches. Questionable approaches to theology or practice do not permit us to discard one or both of them. Instead they encourage us to do it right. We must affirm both theology and practice.

• **Do not handle theological differences by reverting to power.**

While outright heresy must be dealt with and, in the long run, may need to be removed from the Body of Christ, dialogue should take place first. It should not be assumed that a certain office makes the office-bearer quasi-infallible. The early church did not handle theological disagreement by just turning to ecclesiastical power. Such an approach was used later and prepared the way for a strict hierarchical system of church governance and the papacy.

2. More specific suggestions

But what would help us within the Adventist Church to avoid unnecessary tensions and battles?

Consent to the Adventist framework of doing theology. This Adventist framework includes: (a) accepting the self-testimony of Scripture on divine revelation, inspiration, and biblical authority; (b) accepting Scripture as the primary source for theology. Scripture is the measuring rod by which all other sources such as general revelation, extra-biblical prophecy, culture, and personal experience are being evaluated;¹⁵ (c) being Bible-oriented rather than being purely a philosophical, sociological, psychological, or scientific enterprise;¹⁶ (d) doing exegesis and theology using methods derived from Scripture and in agreement with its nature; (e) doing theology with a definite goal, namely a better understanding of God and His plan of salvation (which can be

communicated to others) and a deeper relationship with the Lord. Therefore, Adventist theological thinking is practice-oriented without being pragmatic in the negative sense;¹⁷ (f) a Christ-centered theology;¹⁸ All truth must be related to Jesus and the full biblical message accepted; (g) theological reflection in the context of the great controversy and with a clear eschatological emphasis; (h) systematic theological thinking that describes, analyzes, and organizes biblical doctrines by drawing on the entire Bible. Adventists are not opposed to reasoning. But, while we treasure reason as a gift from God, we also recognize that human reason is fallible and must be sanctified;¹⁹ (i) theological thinking that takes into account contemporary questions and challenges and tries to respond to them. Just because culture shapes human beings to a large extent does not mean that Scripture is culturally conditioned and not directly applicable to our situation, at least in most cases.

Do not concentrate on one theological issue only. There should be an awareness of the danger of riding theological hobbyhorses. Be able to distinguish the essentials from the less important or even obscure issues and focus on the former rather than on the latter. Otherwise there is a danger of becoming imbalanced.

Be tentative with your conclusions. It is better to submit a “suggestion” and be willing to be corrected rather than to be dogmatic about one’s own insights²⁰ and to share them widely before others have evaluated them.

Acknowledge that Adventist theological thinking is not done in isolation. Results of one’s study should be shared with persons of experience to get their input. It is of great importance to listen to others carefully and with an open mind.

Exhibit kindness and a Christlike attitude at all times. Do not be harsh in criticizing those with whom you disagree and certainly do not

mock them, but show kindness and Christian charity. Those who seem to be adversaries need to be taken seriously. Most have certain points that can and should be appreciated.

Conclusion

While theology is needed, at times it can be unnecessarily divisive. Following the above-mentioned guidelines may be a first step toward a solution for this problem. If those involved in doing theology agree with each other concerning basic presuppositions and methodological approaches to Scripture, the danger of their theologies becoming divisive is considerably reduced. In addition, a good dose of humility and respect for others is desirable. In the Adventist church, decisions on theological matters are not made only by administrators or only by theologians or even by both groups together but by the entire church.²¹ We repeat: theological thinking is a privilege and is a necessary and ongoing process which may lead those involved to an ever-deeper understanding and a greater appreciation of God and salvation.

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Continued on page 21

Injustice to one, justice for all

by David Steward

The greater the injustice suffered by Jesus, the greater His love for us shines through. The darker the night, the brighter His light.

I have studied the so-called “trial” of Jesus from a legal perspective and have learned that the injustices ran deeper than I ever imagined. Jesus was prosecuted and ultimately condemned by two tribunals: the Sanhedrin (the Hebrew Supreme Court) and Roman. Both justice systems are known for how much they jealously guarded justice. However, both systems of law were prostituted to destroy the most innocent man who ever lived.¹ Jesus’ arrest, trial and sentence were illegal proceedings, making His case a total sham from beginning to end! “Throughout the whole course of that trial, the rules of the Jewish law of procedure were grossly violated, and that the accused was deprived of rights, belonging even to the meanest citizen. He was arrested in the night, bound as a malefactor, beaten before His arraignment, and struck in open court during the trial; He was tried on a feast day, and before sunrise; He was compelled to criminate himself, and this, under an oath of solemn judicial adjuration; and He was sentenced on the same day of the conviction. In all these particulars, the law was wholly disregarded.”² This paper will examine the violations of Hebrew and Roman law that culminated in the murder of Jesus.

Violations of Hebrew law

Jesus’ arrest itself was illegal on at least three grounds of Hebrew law: it was a nighttime arrest; it was effected by Judas, who would have been considered an accomplice of Jesus; and it was not based on probable cause by offi-

cial seeking righteous judgment.³

The Jewish proceedings took place at night and in private. Night trials were prohibited,⁴ and for good reason: they smack of secrecy and expediency without due process of law. They also undermine the public’s right to attend. Much of the trial was private, but Hebrew law required it to be a public trial.⁵

The Sanhedrin did not hold two sessions, a day apart. The two sessions they held were, at most, only a few hours apart.⁶ This did not afford an opportunity for cooler heads to prevail. In a capital case, the sentence could not be pronounced until the afternoon of the second day. If the Sanhedrin voted to convict the first day, they were to leave the hall of hewn stone and gather in groups of five or six to discuss the case. They walked home by twos, arm in arm, still seeking for arguments on behalf of the accused. After sunset, they made calls on each other to discuss the case further and to pray for divine guidance. The next day they were to pray and fast until the case was decided. They met after the morning sacrifice and again reviewed the evidence. They could change their votes to acquit the accused, but not to condemn him. Before execution, they were to invite spectators to come forward if anyone had evidence in favor of the condemned.⁷ Jesus did not get the benefit of this due process. Since the judges were required to have two sessions a day apart and were not permitted to meet on the weekly Sabbath or on a festival Sabbath, they were also not permitted

to meet the day before the Sabbath.⁸

The trial took place before the morning sacrifice. According to Hebrew law, “no man was considered competent to act as a judge until after sacrifice and prayers had been offered to the great Judge of heaven.”⁹

Jesus was physically abused during the proceedings, even though He should have been presumed innocent and treated with respect. He was struck by an officer who didn’t like the way He spoke to Annas (John 18:22). Between the two sessions of the Sanhedrin, Jesus was also repeatedly beaten, spat upon, blindfolded and mocked (Matthew 26:67; Mark 14:65; Luke 22:63-64). These were outrageous and cruel acts of brutality that Hebrew law did not allow.

The charges against Jesus were vague and changed midstream from sedition – that was not proved since the witnesses “agreed not together” – to blasphemy, given that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God (Mark 14:55-64). The charges against an accused must delineate a specific crime, and the trial must be carried to completion on that charge. Even today, if during a trial a prosecutor cannot prove the original charges, and thus tries to allege a new crime, a judge and jury would laugh him out of court. When the false witnesses against Christ failed to prove sedition, the case should have been dismissed.¹⁰ Blasphemy, the new charge, was one of the most serious offenses known to the Jews, because it disrespected God Himself and was therefore considered tantamount to treason.

The presiding judge of the Sanhedrin initiated the new charge of blasphemy (Matthew 26:63-66). Judges of the Sanhedrin could not initiate charges or prosecute but only investigate charges brought by witnesses.¹¹ Witnesses had to initiate charges, act as the prosecutors, and even execute the sentence of death in capital cases.¹² Deuteronomy 17:7 says, "The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people." Apparently, the rationale for this rule was that if you had to stone someone to death, you might think twice about that of which you accuse him. In reality, no witness came forward to accuse Jesus of blasphemy. In accusing Jesus of blasphemy, the presiding judge acted as a prosecutor, even though judges were supposed to be the defenders.¹³ Also, no judge could speak against the accused until at least one judge had spoken in his behalf,¹⁴ which did not happen in Jesus' trial.

Jesus' conviction of blasphemy was based on His own admissions and nothing else.¹⁵ Hebrew law forbids convicting someone based solely on his or her own admission.¹⁶ The same is true in many modern courts and is called the Corpus Delicti rule. No witness came forward to accuse Jesus of blasphemy.

Jesus was condemned by the unanimous vote of the Sanhedrin, which should have resulted in acquittal. Mark 14:64 says, "And they all condemned him to be guilty of death." An Anglo-Saxon jury generally must be unanimous to reach a valid verdict, but not with Hebrew law. The Hebrew law reasoned that an accused must have at least one defender on the court, or mercy was absent and the spirit of conspiracy or mob violence was present.¹⁷

The judges were unqualified because they bribed Judas to deliver Jesus to them. Judas himself admitted that Jesus was innocent when he publicly confessed that he had "betrayed the

innocent blood" (Matthew 27:4).

The judges were biased against Jesus and absolutely hated Him; therefore, they were unqualified to judge Him fairly. Several times the chief priests and Pharisees conspired to kill Jesus, including after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, and John 11:53 records that "from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death." "When a judge decides not according to the truth, he makes the majesty of God to depart from Israel. But if he judges according to the truth, were it only for an hour, it is as if he established the whole world, for it is in judgment that the divine presence in Israel has its habitation."¹⁸

The judges ignored overwhelming evidence in favor of Christ being the Messiah and therefore innocent of blasphemy. Hebrew law demanded that every effort be made to find evidence on behalf of the defendant.¹⁹ According to the Old Testament, Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies showing him to be the Messiah. For example, He was born in Bethlehem, was born of a virgin, was from the house of David, escaped to Egypt, performed miracles, made a triumphal entry on a donkey in Jerusalem, was betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, and was a man of sorrow, poverty and suffering, to name just a few.

The judges sought and called false witnesses to condemn Jesus. Matthew 26:59-61 says, "Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witnesses against Jesus, to put him to death; but found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet they found none. At the last came two false witnesses, and said, "This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days." A trial is supposed to be a search for the truth.

The requirement that at least two witnesses, who agree in the essential details, incriminate Jesus was not met (Deuteronomy 17:6).

Violations of Roman law

After ruthlessly violating many of their own laws, designed to safeguard justice, the Jews then sought out the Roman authorities to execute the death sentence against Jesus. Because of his reputation for being unjust and cruel, the Jews were confident that Pilate would honor their demonic wish, even though Rome prided itself on having a very civilized and fair judicial system. As attorney Walter Chandler noted, "The Roman judicial system is incomparable in the history of jurisprudence. Judea gave religion, Greece gave letters, and Rome gave laws to mankind. Thus runs the judgment of the world."²⁰

Wicked as he was, Pilate saw something different about the prisoner before him. Rather than rubber-stamping the death wish, he demanded to know the charges alleged against Jesus. The Jews had condemned Jesus for blasphemy, but they knew this religious charge would not suffice with the Romans. So they shifted their accusation from a religious charge to a political one. According to Luke 23:1 and 2, they accused Jesus of three violations of civil law that amounted to treason against Caesar: perverting the nation – sedition against the government; forbidding the paying of taxes, is enough to get any politician's attention; and claiming to be king – treason against Caesar. Jesus admitted to Pilate that He was a king, but that His kingdom was not of this world and not a threat to the Roman government. Like the Jews, Pilate then committed a series of judicial errors by departing from fundamental protections in Roman law.

Pilate violated the law against double jeopardy. After examining Christ, and with no accusing witnesses, Pilate rendered his verdict: "I find in Him no fault at all" (John 18:38). According to former prominent Harvard University Law School professor Simon Greenleaf, Pilate's decision "was a sentence of acquittal, judicially pronounced, and irrevers-

ible, except by a higher power, upon appeal; and it was the duty of Pilate thereupon to have discharged him.”²¹ Pilate had a duty to enforce his decision, dispatch Roman soldiers to disperse the angry mob, and protect Jesus from their fury. The Jews refused to accept Pilate’s verdict and trumped up another charge of sedition by claiming that Jesus stirred up the people from Galilee to Jerusalem (Luke 23:4-5). The law against double jeopardy says that a man cannot be tried twice for the same conduct. It originated with Roman law and is an important principle in modern jurisprudence. Pilate disregarded this law and kept the case against Jesus alive. Pilate was a coward and was trying to satisfy both his conscience and the mob. Seeing an easy out, Pilate then sent the case to Herod. Unscrupulous though he was, Herod refused to condemn Jesus, which was equivalent to another acquittal.

After again acquitting Jesus, and in a vain attempt to reach a compromise with the mob, Pilate ordered an innocent man punished with a cruel beating (Luke 23:13-16). This move was blatantly immoral, illegal, and cowardly. If Jesus was guilty, He should have been punished by more than beating, but if innocent, he should have been set free and protected from the Jews. When the chastisement of Jesus failed to appease the accusers, Pilate made another unsuccessful attempt to dispose of the case, short of killing an innocent man: in honor of the Jewish Passover, he was willing to release either Jesus or the contemptible Barabbas, who was actually guilty of sedition, robbery, and murder – charges leveled against Jesus. Pilate underestimated the hatred of the Jews toward Christ, and the Jews chose the release of Barabbas and demanded the crucifixion of the world’s Messiah.

Pilate showed utter contempt for the innocent Son of God and for the sanctity of the judicial proceedings by allowing Jesus to be mocked with a

purple kingly robe and crown (John 19:2-5).

Pilate set aside the rule of law, which demands an acquittal for an innocent man, to preserve his political office. Pilate had illegally reversed his multiple verdicts of innocence when the Jews threatened his job with a complaint to Caesar. A well-established rule of Roman law stated, “The idle clamor of the populace is not to be regarded, when they call for a guilty man to be acquitted or an innocent one to be condemned.”²² With theatrical show, Pilate washed his hands, when he should have used them in “pointing his legion to the field of duty and glory”²³ to put down the mob. The water did not wash away the blood of Jesus from his hands. All “the water of the Mediterranean would not have been sufficient to wash away the guilt of the Roman governor.”²⁴ Pilate condemned and murdered Jesus even though no crime was formally declared, no witnesses were called, no evidence was presented, no proof was given of a criminal act, and he had found him innocent!²⁵

The purpose of this essay is not so much to condemn the tribunals of man, but to uplift the majesty of Jesus Christ. The greater the injustice suffered by Jesus, the greater His love for us shines through. The darker the night, the brighter His light. Even though I grew up as a Christian and had been taught of Jesus, it wasn’t until I had a personal encounter with the injustice of Calvary that I was converted. The willingness of Jesus to endure, with patience and without objection, the greatest travesty of injustice the world has ever known, revealed to me God’s perfect love and goodness. I then accepted Him into my life, and He filled my empty heart – which had vainly pursued power, pleasure, status, and wealth – with joy. While it is interesting to evaluate all the injustices committed by both the Jews and Romans, ultimately, all of us are responsible for the death of Christ,

since he was “wounded for our transgressions” (Isaiah 53:5). “Christ was treated as we deserve that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. With His stripes we are healed.”²⁶

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Continued on page 21

Humans and chimpanzees are 99.4% identical...or are they?

by Timothy G. Standish

Are humans and apes essentially identical? The answer to this question will depend heavily upon the philosophical assumptions one brings to the data.

Recently, the city buses in my neighborhood gained a new set of brightly-colored advertisements along their sides. In bold letters, they proclaimed that humans and chimpanzees are 98% identical: "Come and meet your relatives."¹ I'm not sure how effective these advertisements were at attracting visitors to the new monkey display being advertised, but they made an impression on my seventh-grade daughter. When precise-sounding statistics like this make it into advertising campaigns, they are likely to be lodged in the minds of everyone from children to grandparents. But where do these numbers come from? And what do they really mean?

Even a cursory examination of the percentages given for human and chimp genome similarity quickly reveals that any perception of precision is an illusion. The 98% number appears commonly,² but so do other numbers. For example, 99.4% is another published figure that sounds more precise and makes humans and chimps even closer.³ When comparing portions of the chimpanzee and human genomes, one paper suggested they are 98.77% identical.⁴ On the other hand, some early published comparisons of portions of the human and chimpanzee genomes lowered the estimate to 95%.⁵

When a draft copy of the more or less complete chimpanzee genome was published in 2005,⁶ the conclusion was that the human and chimpanzee

genomes are 96% similar. Despite the fact that this estimate is significantly lower than most previous ones, this new number prompted Emory University primate scientist Frans de Waal to proclaim, "Darwin wasn't just provocative in saying that we descend from the apes – he didn't go far enough... We are apes in every way, from our long arms and tailless bodies to our habits and temperament."⁷

Of course Darwin *did* go quite far enough without the aid of modern DNA sequencing technology. The oft-proclaimed mantra that he never said humans descended from apes⁸ is simply untrue. In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin dedicates the whole of chapter 6, "On the Affinities and Genealogy of Man," to making the argument that humans are apes and therefore, like all other apes, descended from the common ancestor of all apes, which was an ape itself. One of Darwin's greatest supporters, Thomas Henry Huxley, had made this argument in print by at least 1863,⁹ only four years after the publication of Darwin's *The Origin of Species* and well before Darwin published *The Descent of Man*.

Within the confines of Darwinian thinking, similarities between organisms, often referred to as homologies, are treated as evidence of common ancestry. Thus, two organisms that have more things in common than some third organism are thought to have a more recent common ancestor than either does with the third

creature. For example, frogs and cows both have camera-type eyes, four legs and many other features in common, and earthworms lack these traits; thus, frogs and cows, according to Darwinian thinking, have a more recent common ancestor than either does to worms. When dealing with DNA sequences, the same logic is applied: when chimpanzees and humans are found to have more DNA in common than either does to other organisms, this is seen as powerful confirmation of Darwin's ideas. But DNA has an extra panache to it in that it is the very genetic material that is passed from parents to offspring.

Viewed from a creationist perspective, DNA similarity between humans and chimpanzees is hardly surprising. Of all the animals, chimpanzees and gorillas are clearly the ones that most resemble humans. It would be startling to discover that the Creator went back to the drawing board and drew up a completely different code for chimpanzees. This would be illogical, something like noting that Toyota Camrys and Corollas look similar and then predicting that the engineering plans for them must be completely different. Apes look more like humans than cows do because, among other things, their DNA is more like humans. Thus, while DNA sequence similarities appear to be exactly what creationists and evolutionists would expect, some Darwinists act as if they are somehow confirmation of

Darwinian thinking and thus disproof of creationism.

How differences between genomes came to be

A far more interesting question, one that creation readily explains and Darwinism claims to explain, is how differences between the human and chimpanzee genomes came to be. Understanding this requires knowledge of the various classes of differences that may exist between any two genomes. Figure 1 summarizes some of these differences. While analogies with language are not perfect, there are enough similarities between the way in which DNA encodes information and the way letters encode information in the English language that a general illustration is possible of the problems inherent in deciding how similar two sequences of DNA are can be made using English examples.

Remember that DNA is spelled out in molecular “letters” called bases. Unlike English, there are only four letters in the DNA “language,” abbreviated as A, T, G and C. Now, imagine two DNA sequences:

GAATGC
TAATGA

There are a total of six letters in each sequence, and sequence 1 and sequence 2 only differ by two bases, the first and the last bases in each sequence. If only the number of letters in common were being compared, then these sequences would be 2/3, or 67% identical. A similar example in the English language would be the words “dad” and “had”; they also are 67% identical if you only look at the letters, but their meanings are completely different. In the DNA example above, if these two sequences were part of a protein-coding gene, they would have completely different meanings. When coding for a protein, DNA uses words called “codons” that are all three bases in length. Each codon codes for one amino acid and proteins are simply specific sequences

Figure 1

Sequence 1: Human beta-globin (Hb A)

ATGGTGCATC TGA**CTCCTG**A GGAGAAGTCT
GCCGTTACTG CCCTGTGGGG CAAGGTGAAC
GTGGATGAAG TTGGTGGTGA GGCCTGGGC
AGGCTGCTGG TGGTCTACCC TTGGACCCAG
AGGTTCTTTG AGTCCTTTGG GGATCTGTCC
ACTCCTGATG CTGTTATGGG CAACCCTAAG
GTGAAGGCTC ATGGCAAGAA AGTGCTCGGT
GCCTTTAGTG ATGGCCTGGC TCACCTGGAC
AACCTCAAGG GCACCTTTGC CACACTGAGT
GAGCTGCACT GTGACAAGCT GCACGTGGAT
CCTGAGAACT TCAGGCTCCT GGGCAACGTG
CTGGTCTGTG TGCTGGCCCA TCACTTTGGC
AAAGAATTCA CCCCACCAGT GCAGGCTGCC
TATCAGAAAG TGGTGGCTGG TGTGGCTAAT
GCCCTGGCCC ACAAGTATCA CTAA

Sequence 2: Human beta S-globin (Hb S)

ATGGTGCATC TGA**CTCCTG**T GGAGAAGTCT
GCCGTTACTG CCCTGTGGGG CAAGGTGAAC
GTGGATGAAG TTGGTGGTGA GGCCTGGGC
AGGCTGCTGG TGGTCTACCC TTGGACCCAG
AGGTTCTTTG AGTCCTTTGG GGATCTGTCC
ACTCCTGATG CTGTTATGGG CAACCCTAAG
GTGAAGGCTC ATGGCAAGAA AGTGCTCGGT
GCCTTTAGTG ATGGCCTGGC TCACCTGGAC
AACCTCAAGG GCACCTTTGC CACACTGAGT
GAGCTGCACT GTGACAAGCT GCACGTGGAT
CCTGAGAACT TCAGGCTCCT GGGCAACGTG
CTGGTCTGTG TGCTGGCCCA TCACTTTGGC
AAAGAATTCA CCCCACCAGT GCAGGCTGCC
TATCAGAAAG TGGTGGCTGG TGTGGCTAAT
GCCCTGGCCC ACAAGTATCA CTAA

of amino acids that have been joined together. In this particular case, GAA in sequence 1 means the amino acid glutamic acid (glutamate), and TGC¹⁰ means a very different amino acid called cysteine. The codons in the second sequence, TAA and TGA, even though they differ by one base each from the codons in DNA sequence 1, have completely different meanings. In fact, neither codes for an amino acid at all. These codons are called stop codons, as they act like periods at the end of a sentence in the DNA language. They signal where the DNA coding for a protein ends.

The take-home lesson from this is that relatively small changes in DNA can make a very big difference. This is a common feature of both DNA sequences and words spelled out in English. Sometimes just moving a letter to a different position in a word can make a huge difference. In DNA, the codons GGU and UGG both code for amino acids, but the first one codes for the simplest amino acid, glycine, while the second codes for tryptophan, which is among the largest and most complex amino acids. An example in English would be simply moving the c in “creation” and mak-

ing the completely different-meaning word “reaction.”

Let’s look at an example of two DNA sequences that differ by less than 1% but produce very different products. See figure 1.

There are 444 bases in each of these sequences, and they differ by only one base, the 20th one in the sequence (shown in bold).¹¹ Thus, the sequence difference between these sequences is 0.225%; they are 99.775% identical, and yet the first sequence codes for one of the proteins found in normal hemoglobin, while the second sequence codes for an abnormal protein that causes sickle cell anemia, a devastating genetic disease.¹² The 0.225% DNA sequence difference translates into a 0.676% protein sequence difference, and this tiny difference causes profound illness. Not all changes of this magnitude have such a big impact, but this illustration serves to show that small DNA sequence differences can, and in fact do, amount to very big differences in organisms.

Are two sequences the same or different?

How does one really determine

whether two sequences are essentially the same or totally different? Obviously, simply looking at individual letters will not be useful in determining whether two documents are different or the same. The exact same letters of the alphabet are used to encode the information in the King James Bible and *The Origin of Species*. When looking at DNA, exactly the same bases are used to code the information in humans and the little *E. coli* bacteria that live in our guts. When comparing books, many if not all of the words used might be the same, but the books can be clearly different. When comparing organisms, the codons used to code for proteins may be the same, but the organisms are different. Clearly, one important factor to take into consideration when comparing DNA sequences is the length of the sequences that are being compared. This is illustrated by the exercise given at the end of this article.

Another important factor to consider when comparing DNA sequences is the way information encoding how DNA will be expressed as proteins appears to be quite different from the way we express things in the English language. While it is common to think of DNA as mainly coding for proteins, this is not really the case: only about 3% of human DNA actually codes for proteins. In the past, the remaining 97% was thought to be simply flotsam and jetsam of the evolutionary process and essentially functionless “junk DNA.” More recently, it has become evident that much of this noncoding DNA regulates the production of proteins from the protein-coding regions, while other parts are involved in additional vital activities.¹³

Within the human and chimp genomes, much of this noncoding DNA is in the form of repeated sequences. It is hard to gauge the importance of these repeated sequences, or even to evaluate them, as they present unique challenges to modern DNA-sequencing techniques. Thus,

even though we talk of the human genome sequence as complete, it is not really 100% completed. Because repeated sequences have been assumed to be unimportant, they have been ignored in some sequence comparisons. For example, in the studies on which the figure of 98% similarity between human and chimpanzee DNA are based, repetitive DNA was first eliminated and then the comparison was made.¹⁴ This is loosely analogous to comparing the words used in two books after removing the most commonly-occurring words in English,¹⁵ something that could clearly skew the outcome of any statistical comparison.

A further complicating factor when looking at comparisons of different organisms’ genomes is that the differences seem to be concentrated in specific areas in their genomes, not distributed randomly. For example, the human and chimp genomes exhibit such variation in how much difference exists between analogous segments that it has been suggested that the two organisms evolved into separate species once, then separated for several million years before coming together again about 6.3 million years ago,¹⁶ and then separating again.¹⁷ This variation in the amount of difference evident in sequences is not just at the DNA level, but also in specific genes coding for specific proteins. For example, a number of genes known to play a role in development of the nervous system are, unsurprisingly, more different than the average difference between human and chimpanzee genes. Darwinists attribute this to “positive selection” on those genes,¹⁸ but why this selection would operate on those genes dealing with intelligence in human ancestors and not those of chimpanzee ancestors is not obvious. It is hard to imagine that intelligence is adaptive in only humans and their ancestors. But these variations in the degree of difference between different segments of DNA

are not restricted to individual genes or parts of chromosomes. There is a strikingly small difference between chimp and human X chromosomes compared to differences between the other chromosomes. Exactly how natural selection would do this is not immediately obvious, and seems to require some type of contorted story to make the data fit with Darwinian assumptions.

Role of proteins in living things

There is one other profound difference between the ways in which the human and chimpanzee genomes work, and this may have the greatest impact on why they do not produce essentially identical organisms. To understand this requires a slightly different way of viewing the role of the proteins in living things. DNA codes for proteins in much the same way as a set of specifications might define the kind of screws or other parts to be used in a machine. Many parts can be combined in different ways to make different kinds of machines. For example, if the slotted truss-head screw that holds together a pair of scissors was lost, it may be possible to replace it with a socket cap screw. Conversely, it may be possible to take the same parts, or very similar parts to those found in one machine, and combine them to produce a very different device. For example, a leaf spring, some screws, cabling, and a few other parts from a car could be combined to make an excellent crossbow.

What is the point of all this when it comes to the human and chimpanzee genomes? While it is tempting to think of the differences between humans and chimpanzees to be the result of differences between their respective proteins, in reality the differences probably result more from differences in how the protein parts are put together. This seems to be exactly what is seen when individual proteins are produced from information found in the human and chim-

panzee genomes, respectively. It turns out that the genes are expressed in very different ways in different primates, including humans and chimpanzees. These differences in gene expression appear to be the result of differences in a subset of proteins called “transcription factors.”¹⁹ It should not be surprising to discover that Darwinists also attribute these differences to “positive selection.”

It is not just that the proteins themselves are combined in different ways to make different kinds of creatures; when it comes to chimpanzees and humans, the genomes themselves are put together in interestingly different ways. For example, during sexual reproduction, the DNA from both parents is shuffled much like a deck of cards to create the unique chromosomes that will go into the sperm and eggs and ultimately into the offspring of a couple. When this happens, DNA has to be physically broken and then joined together again. This process is complex and does not happen in random locations. The locations at which cuts and new combinations (recombinations) occur in chimpanzee chromosomes are different from those in human chromosomes.²⁰

So are humans and apes essentially identical? The answer to this question will depend heavily upon the philosophical assumptions one brings to the data. In this article, I have sought to show that the numbers given for percent differences between the human and chimpanzee genomes lack the precision implied in their use. In addition, where one looks in the respective genomes makes a very big difference in the conclusions that one might draw. Finally, the way in which information encoded in DNA is translated into proteins and ultimately into living creatures is clearly profoundly different between humans and apes. If one wishes to do so, a strong case could be made emphasizing the abundant differences between human and chimpanzee DNA. In addition, it is

worth noting that as more information comparing the genomes is published, the differences appear to be more profound than was thought even a few years ago. But it would be ridiculous to suggest that chimpanzees are not more similar to humans than frogs, fish, flies, or finches. In any group of objects or creatures, some must have more in common than others. The big question is really one of what one should conclude from these similarities and differences.

There is one other thing that should serve as a caution to those who wish to draw sweeping conclusions, and that is the disturbing way in which proponents of both Darwinism and creationism have used data in the past as they advocate their various positions. In our own church, there are a number of published statements that were probably not helpful at the time and seem disturbing today. For example, Uriah Smith argued on the front page of the *Review and Herald* that “[N]aturalists affirm that the line of demarcation between the human and animal races is lost in confusion. It is impossible, as they affirm to tell just where the human ends and the animal begins.”²¹ This line of thinking can also be found in later statements like that of Dores Robinson, secretary to Ellen G. White, who wrote, “Anyone who observes the chimpanzee, the gorilla or the orang, would not find it difficult to believe that they have some common ancestry with the human race... It is far more reasonable to believe that apes descended from man...”²² On the other hand, at least one Darwinist, based on his understanding of 98% similarity between the human and chimpanzee genomes, has advocated the horrifying prospect of creating human-chimpanzee chimeras, “Because in these dark days of know-nothing anti-evolutionism, with religious fundamentalists occupying the White House, controlling Congress and attempting to distort the teaching of science in our schools,

a powerful dose of biological reality would be healthy indeed. And this is precisely the message that chimeras, hybrids or mixed-species clones would drive home.”²³

The Bible is explicit about the special place of humanity in creation: “God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27). Because of its very nature and because we now “see through a glass darkly” (1 Corinthians 13:12), science cannot give definitive answers about the nature of humanity; its conclusions are invariably tentative and subject to the philosophical filter through which data are viewed. Even with those limitations, it is interesting to note that a clear trend exists, one that is evident in some other cutting-edge areas of science, and that is that as understanding increases and data accumulate, the bold assertions of the past, which appeared to be inconsistent with traditional biblical views, are called into question, while views consistent with biblical claims appear more tenable.

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 11. The mature beta globin protein begins with the amino acid valine; the altered amino acid in beta S-globin is the sixth amino acid which is converted from glutamic acid in normal beta globin to valine in the mutated protein. The first amino acid coded for in the sequences given is actually methionine, but this amino acid is removed in the mature form of the protein.
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Continued from page 16

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Continued from page 13

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10. Cf. Jan Paulsen, "Heavenly Mission of Hope: Christ's Mission Is Our Mission," *Adventist Review*, September 24, 2009, 3.
11. Cf. Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 2003), 172-173.
12. *Ibid.*, 173.
13. Roy Adams, "In a Time of Confusion," *Adventist Review*, November 2000, 19.
14. Roy Adams, "Grappling With Destiny," *Adventist Review*, April 25, 2002, 24.
15. Therefore, we cannot agree with the principle prima scriptura, as suggested by Fritz Guy, *Thinking Theologically: Adventist Christianity and the Interpretation of Faith* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1999), 137, but uphold sola scriptura and tota scriptura. The implications of Guy's approach become more evident on pp. 144, 146.
16. Ángel Rodríguez, "Doing Theology in the Adventist Church: Role of the Theologian," unpublished paper, February 2003, 7.
17. Cf. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1998), 24.
18. This should not be confused with the Christological principle employed, for example, by Martin Luther.
19. Cf. Frank Hasel, "Theology and the Role of Reason," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 4/2 (1993): 172-198.
20. Cf. Rodríguez, 18.
21. Cf. Rodríguez, 15.

PROFILE



Davide Sciarabba

Dialogue with an Adventist pastor and sports chaplain from Italy

Interview by Ruben Sanchez-Sabaté

Davide Sciarabba was born into a family that loved sports, and he participated in many sports activities while growing up. Over the years, as Sciarabba spent much of his time learning the techniques of various types of sports, he not only excelled as a sportsman but also became interested in the challenge sports offer to the development of the whole person. While sports interested him from childhood, he was challenged even more by the concept behind sports and other physical activities: the idea that such activities are only a part of the wider challenge of developing the human person wholistically in order to be of service to the Creator God who made human beings in His own image.

Sciarabba is a fourth-generation Adventist, and his family's first concern was spiritual development. With that as a given, he and his family members were fully involved in the imperative of Christian education to be of service to others and to the church. As such, Sciarabba devoted his life to being a Christian educator, particularly in the field of physical education.

Davide Sciarabba received his first degree in physical education. Later, he obtained a master's degree in education. Eventually he completed a master of arts degree in theology and became a pastor. His master's dissertation dealt with values found in the Pauline use of sports metaphors. Currently, he is working at Andrews University on a Ph.D. in religion with an emphasis on ethics.

Although he did not win any races or medals in sports, he was very

involved in interacting with young people who were participating as professionals in various sports. Youths involved in sports often get discouraged by failure or disappointments. Some get overtaken by victory and miss out on the essential meaning of sports. To these young people, Sciarabba became a personal friend and counselor. He found his ministry in sports counseling and reached out pastorally to many young people, both within and outside of the church. The chief moment of such involvement came during the Turin Winter Olympic Games in 2006, when he served as a chaplain to many athletes from around the world. Three years later, he was equally successful at the World Track and Field Championship in Berlin. The first Adventist to serve as a sports chaplain at such major world events, Davide Sciarabba brought comfort and strength to those who experienced disappointment, and encouraged the winners to place their victory within the context of providing an example of hard work and training to the younger generation.

As an ordained minister, Pastor Davide Sciarabba has served the church for 10 years in Italy, France, and Spain as a pastor, chaplain, and professor. He is married to Sonia Badenas, assistant professor of French at Andrew University, and the couple has two children: Flavia and Marco.

■ *What kind of religious or spiritual counsel do sports persons seek? Do those who seek such counsel really believe in a personal God?*

Athletes are just like other young people, with their own personal needs, problems, and desires. Some are committed believers, while others may not be. Most of the athletes who come to see a chaplain are believers, but others who feel a special need for spiritual counseling may also come.

Each person is different, and it is not easy to make a personal judgment on their quality of faith. Some think of God as a good luck charm that brings success. To others, God is a contract partner (“I promise this, you do that for me”). Still others view God as a predeterminator: God has foreordained, and whatever will be. Others look to God as a disposer of commodities – maturity, peace, comfort, and other blessings. Regardless of the quality or maturity of their faith, I try to be a counselor, sharing my knowledge and experience about God with them. I encourage each one to find a faith they can rely on.

■ *When counseling with athletes, how do you help them deal with victory and defeat?*

Victory is an important perception for athletes. They are aware that only one person or one team can win, and they dream of being that person or on that team. Defeat makes them feel frustrated and disappointed, while victory gives them pride and happiness. Victory and defeat shape the mind of an athlete, and can be life changing, but it is important to recognize that victory or defeat is not the whole thing in life.

Sports as a social phenomenon tends to globalize feelings, pressures, results, and economic interests. As a result, we have a culture of “one winner” and “many losers.” When we deal with victory and defeat, we have to keep in mind that these concepts are quite relative. One sports association has taken as its motto, “More than Gold.” I like that. It is important that athletes understand that in life there is something more important than the gold

medal: life, values, dignity, and God.

■ *Do you try to evangelize the athletes you work with?*

It depends on what you mean by “evangelizing.” If you are asking whether I proselytize, my answer is no. I don’t try to make athletes into Adventists. If they ask me questions about my personal faith, I will tell them that I am a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, and I will share with them what I believe. If they are Christians, I do speak to them about Jesus. I evangelize in the sense that I help them, at their request, to meet Jesus. Together we may start or explore the journey of faith. If they are not Christians, I try to help them find God with the maximum respect for their faith. From there, if they ask about my Christian faith I will present Jesus to them. I personally believe that God has many ways to reach His children.

■ *What do you think God expects from you when counseling at a sports event?*

I believe God expects me to sow the seeds of the gospel in a respectful way. What I can do depends very much on the athlete’s culture and beliefs. To sow the good news does not mean only to speak about Jesus but also to act like Jesus: meeting, listening, helping, caring, healing, encouraging, praying, etc. I think that He wants me to ignite the desire in the athlete’s heart to search for God. He asks me to be His ears, mouth, heart, hands, and feet. Thus, a strong relationship can be created. Even after many years, I still maintain contact with some athletes and volunteers I met during major sports events.

■ *Do you know of any Adventists in major sports?*

Unfortunately, no. One of the biggest obstacles for Adventists to excel in major sports is that such events usually fall on Sabbath.

■ *Are there other ways to approach this challenge? What is the official church position on this?*

The Adventist faith and practice, such as Sabbath keeping, have their demands on life as a whole. Sports is no exception. As Adventists participate or interact in various professions, they have to make decisions in consonance with their faith. While we have no right to pass judgment on others, we personally should submit what we do, what we say, and how we relate to the principles revealed in the Scripture, including Sabbath keeping. I do not think it is right for me to be the conscience of others. Rather, it is the singular believer who before God has to make his/her own decision. It is not just the type of work that I do not do on Sabbath that makes me holy, but also the reason and the spirit that inspires my action: to be useful, to help, to heal, etc. Sports can hardly qualify for the three examples mentioned. Nevertheless, I believe that there are ways to avoid playing on Sabbath. For instance, special contracts exempting Sabbath play, worked out with a reduced salary, may allow one to be involved in some key events.

■ *Do you think the church should promote Adventists becoming elite athletes?*

I do not think the church should be involved in any such promotion. The world of sports is very vulnerable, changing, complex, and full of problems. We cannot be sure that everything we see in the sport elite is real. We know that athletes train very hard, and they need to have a healthy lifestyle; however, in order to perform better, they are too often pushed to go beyond what is reasonable, natural, or even healthy. Sports was born as a peacemaking medium among ancient Greek cities. The Olympic Games turned into an offering to the gods. Subsequently, sports has been used to distract the masses from the main problems in society (corruption, pov-

erty, etc.). I believe that today sports may serve the same purpose: to help people forget their personal, social, and religious problems for a while. Should we encourage sports as an escape mechanism among Adventists? While the decision may be left to each individual, the church should help young people to face life realistically and lead an authentic Christian life.

■ *How can we use sports in our mission of preaching the gospel?*

Sports may be a good means of conveying Christian values. Sports chaplaincy is certainly one of the best ways to reach athletes. Catholics, Protestants, and Evangelicals are already using this ministry to reach elite athletes. Our church needs to better understand the importance



of chaplaincy ministries. We are so focused on classical evangelistic campaigns that we only reach a very small group of people through lectures. Chaplaincy is a way of witnessing to gospel values where the people are, where they work and live, with fewer barriers.

■ *What attitude should we as Adventists take toward sports today?*

The church has always insisted on the importance of a healthy life, and this is not possible without appropriate exercise. Historically, our educators preferred to promote physical exercise by means of useful activities, such as farming, gardening, etc. For many years, sports was considered to be a worldly activity, and more or less looked on with disfavor by committed believers. But our society has changed. Most people now live in big cities. Agriculture and farming have become very specialized and industrialized. What was easy to do a few years ago – namely, useful physical work – has become more and more difficult in our urban societies, schools, and universities. In many countries, work requires a minimum age. Meanwhile, sports has become part of regular school programs. Our health principles have not changed, but the way of fostering and obtaining physical exercise has changed. Sports has taken an important role that we cannot ignore.

■ *What is the current philosophy of sports in Adventist education? How can sports teach our Adventist values?*

Adventist education has always advocated a balanced development of the individual – physically, spiritually,

and mentally. Physical education is an important part of this goal, and in our present situation we must develop a new philosophy of sports. This is something in which I am personally very much involved. I am working toward a better way of teaching Adventist values through an alternative way of practicing some sports.

Sports is so pervasive in the world today that we should take advantage of this situation. Instead of remaining passive or hostile to sports, we should take a fresh look at holistic education and bring a new clarity to how sports may help us achieve this goal. Our schools and universities should be leaders in this domain, by organizing and promoting sports activities from a Christian perspective. This is what I try to do in the sports courses that I teach at Andrews University.

■ *Finally, what have you learned from being a counselor to athletes?*

I have learned a lot about values such as discipline, determination, teamwork, and enthusiasm for a goal. I have also learned from their perseverance, their methodical work to strive toward overcoming problems. I have also been impressed by their humility in the face of competition.

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Daniel D. Ntanda Nsereko

Dialogue with an Adventist judge at the International Criminal Court at The Hague

Interview by Hudson E. Kibuuka

Dr. Daniel Nsereko hails from Uganda. He was born into a family of nine. His father was a lay preacher in the Anglican Church until he became an Adventist in 1950. Nsereko was baptized into the Adventist faith in 1960, when he was in secondary school. After completing his primary and secondary education at Anglican mission schools in Uganda, he joined the University of Dar es Salam, which was part of the then University of East Africa. There he obtained a Bachelor of Laws degree (LL.B.), and moved on to Howard University School of Law, in Washington, D.C., to obtain a master's degree in comparative jurisprudence (M.C.J.). He also obtained a Master of Law (LL.M.) degree at New York University School of Law in New York City. The final step in his educational career led to the degree of Doctor of Juridical Science (J.S.D.) at the same university. For his doctoral degree, he wrote a dissertation titled "The International Protection of Refugees."

Nsereko began his professional career as an advocate in Uganda in 1972. Among his many clients was the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which was going through many crises, including an official ban by then President Idi Amin in 1977. Later, Nsereko also served as lecturer and then senior lecturer at Uganda's Makerere University Faculty of Law. From

there he moved to the University of Botswana, where he served as senior lecturer, associate professor, and then full professor. He also served as head of the University of Botswana law department for eight years. In 2007, Nsereko received the honor of being elected a judge of the International Criminal Court at The Hague, Netherlands.

Nsereko is married and has five children.

■ *How did you get appointed to the position you hold today?*

I was elected judge of the International Criminal Court in December, 2007, by the Assembly of States Parties, which is the Court's legislative or oversight body established by the countries that have ratified or acceded to the Rome Treaty, under which the Court was established. The Court is a permanent international institution – the first of its kind – with its seat at The Hague, the Netherlands.

The International Criminal Court tries individuals – usually political, military and militia, and leaders – who are suspected of committing the most serious crimes of international concern, such as aggression, genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. It may impose punishment – usually imprisonment – on an individual it finds guilty.

■ *What are your responsibilities?*

The Court is organized into three divisions: the Pre-Trial Division, the Trial Division, and the Appeals Division. I serve on the Appeals Division as an appeals judge. Appeals judges hear and determine appeals from decisions of chambers of both the Pre-Trial and Trial Divisions. They may confirm, reverse, or amend the appealed decisions.

■ *Did your early education prepare you in any way for this kind of service?*

Yes, it did. My home education included daily Bible study and prayer “without ceasing.” My parents impressed on me the importance of staying connected to the Source of wisdom. I need that wisdom to guide and sustain me in my solemn and challenging work. My high school and university education helped create in me an independent, analytical, and inquiring mind. In particular, my study of history, literature, and religion imbued me with a passion for justice and fairness and a desire to fight injustice through law. My education also equipped me with the communication skills that are so essential to the work of a lawyer and judge.

■ *How do you manage your responsibilities?*

Managing one’s tasks at any level requires basically the same qualities. In my entire life – beginning as a student, growing as a professional, and now serving at an international level – I’ve always found that prayer is a great source of strength. Keeping connected with God helps us to do well in family, community, and professional life. In addition, we need to do our job conscientiously, collegially, and with utmost integrity and fairness.

■ *Some people misunderstand law or being a lawyer or a judge. What is your comment on this?*

With respect to law, we all should recognize that wherever individuals

live together in a community, there must be law. Law helps regulate our relations with each other, confer mutual rights and impose mutual obligations, and generally proscribes conduct that we should not engage in, all in the interest of the community as a whole. Without law, there would be chaos or anarchy. Life in such a lawless community would be intolerable.

The Apostle Paul pointed out the necessity of civil laws when he wrote in Romans 13 that God has established governments for the benefit of those who “do right.” Thankfully, God, who created people, communities of people and of nations, is a loving God. He is the God of order and not of anarchy. Thus law, as a regulator of human conduct and as an antidote to anarchy, is essential, indeed indispensable to life in a community. True, temporal law is not perfect, just as the people who make or enforce it are not perfect, but it is necessary.

We cannot talk about law without lawyers. The two go hand in glove. But who are lawyers? Lawyers are individuals who specialize in the study of the science of law, its place in society, and its enactment, interpretation, and application to real-life situations. Lawyers work in many and varied capacities. They may be involved in drafting and enacting laws. They may work as advisors to government agencies, non-governmental bodies, business corporations, and private individuals as to the requirements of the law and the legal consequences of planned or past actions. They also may assist clients to assert or to enforce their rights against others, or to respond to or defend claims or suits against them. They may appear and speak on behalf of clients before courts, tribunals, administrative agencies, and other adjudicatory or administrative bodies or authorities.

The role of lawyers in the community in today’s increasingly-complex and highly-regulated society, where knowledge of the law is indispens-

able, cannot be overstated. Lawyers are just as essential to the well-being of the community as doctors are to the preservation of health, advising on the prevention and cure of disease. You need a lawyer – if possible a God-fearing lawyer – in the same way you need a doctor. In particularly complex matters, it would be unsafe for you to act as your own lawyer, in the same way that it would be unsafe for you to be your own doctor.

It is not true, as one often hears, that all that lawyers do is to defend “criminals.” Yet I must hasten to add that under most legal systems of the world, anyone accused of a crime has a right to be assisted by a lawyer to prepare and present his or her defense before the courts of law.

It must not be assumed that everyone accused is actually guilty of committing a crime. For example, Jesus was accused before Pilate, and Paul before Felix, but they were innocent.

It is also not true that it is part of the practice of the law to tell lies, just as it is not part of the practice of accountancy to falsify accounts. It could not be, because law is about truth, justice, and fairness. Legal ethics forbid lawyers to tell lies or to mislead the court or to use their privileged position to perpetrate fraud or crime. That is why it is so important that individuals who study and practice law should be God-fearing.

Really, the question should not be whether there should be judges, but rather, what kind of judges. Moses commanded the judges of Israel: “Hear the disputes between your brethren and judge fairly, whether the case is between brother Israelites or between one of them and an alien. Do not show partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike. Do not be afraid of any man, for judgment belongs to God” (Deuteronomy 1:16-17, NIV). Our communities – local, national, and international – need men and women of integrity to serve as judges.

■ *What advice would you give to young Adventists wishing to take up law?*

I would encourage young Adventists to study law. Law will equip them to serve their fellow human beings and their communities, countries, and church. There are innumerable facets of law they can specialize in, including constitutional law, administrative law, human-rights law, international law, criminal law, family law, inheritance law, employment law, corporate and business law, real-property law, tax law, patent, copyright and trademark law, and legislative drafting.

Young Adventists should also aspire to serve as judges, which I consider the ultimate practice of law. By God's grace, there are Adventists around the world already serving as judges. More need to join their ranks.

■ *Your love for the church is passionate, and you actively participate in several of its activities. How do you manage to do this, and how is your faith affected by your current position?*

From the time I was baptized, church has always been an essential part of my life. My current position is reason for me to strengthen my bond with the community of fellow believers as we journey to the Promised Land. My judicial position has strengthened, not adversely affected, my faith. I have realized more and more that with total dependence on God, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13, NRSV). I am assured that God, who placed me in this position, is constantly with me to guide, sustain, and give me wisdom to discharge the challenges that the position entails. Like Paul, I can assert that in God I live and move and have my being (Acts 17:28). Without God, I am nothing and can do nothing good.

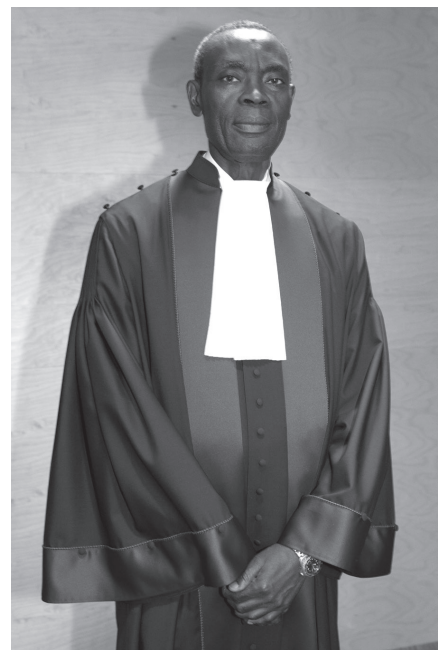
■ *With the heavy responsibilities you bear, do you find enough time for your family?*

I try to. Besides God, my family is my base and anchor. I am grateful to my wife and to my children and to my extended family for their encouragement and support over the years.

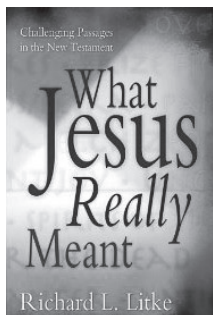
■ *What is your advice to young professionals in general and your last comment?*

My advice to young professionals in every field of endeavor is that they should aim high and work hard to attain their goals. God has promised those who fear Him that they will be the head and not the tail. Also, young professionals should take their religion with them to their work. I do not mean that they should be partisan or parochial – not at all. I mean they should let their moral principles, informed by their religion, guide them in their day-to-day work and in their private and professional lives. I cannot put it better than Ellen G. White, who wrote: "Take your religion into your school-life, into your boarding-house, into all your pursuits" (*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 82).

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BOOKS



What Jesus Really Meant
by Richard L. Litke (Nampa, Idaho:
Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2010; 156
pages; softcover).

Reviewed by Sandra Blackmer

The Bible often speaks in terms simple enough for children to understand, yet texts and phrases pop up here and there that might leave the casual reader in a puzzle. Unless the person is familiar with the dialect of the Greek language in which the books of the New Testament were originally composed, as well as their cultural context, it can be a challenge to determine what the author actually is saying.

Richard L. Litke, Ph.D., professor emeritus of Walla Walla University and an expert in Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic, tackles some of these “problem” texts, and in easy-to-understand language analyzes the phraseology and explains its meaning within the culture of New Testament times. Using short chapters and clear reasoning, Litke dispels much of the confusion surrounding scriptures that some may describe as “troublesome.” For example:

- Did Peter actually use foul language in an attempt to convince his interrogators that he was not associated with Jesus, or do the terms *curse* and *swear* in Matthew 26:74* mean something more distinctive?
- In Revelation 3:10, is God seeking empathy from the church of Philadelphia for what He Himself has endured?
- What exactly is God’s “glory,” as described in such texts as Luke 2:9, Luke 9:32, and John 8:50?
- In Hebrews 6:20, Paul says that Jesus has “become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” Who is this person? What does Paul mean here?
- Is repentance unattainable for some people, as Hebrews 6:4-6 appears to indicate: “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift... if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance”?
- What did Jesus mean in John 8:51 when he said His followers could “never see death,” since, obviously, they all died long ago?
- Did Jesus really call the Samaritan woman a “dog” in Matthew 15:26, insulting her race?

Chapter 33, “The Days of Rage and Danger” is particularly intriguing. Litke begins here with a story of a Greek military commander named Clearchus. According to

ancient historians, he notes, Clearchus was a brilliant and successful leader who had one distinct weakness: a violent temper. “It didn’t take much to send him into a fit of rage,” Litke writes, “and when he was angry, he was frighteningly dangerous” – to the point where those around him feared for their lives. Litke then reveals a surprising link between Clearchus and 2 Timothy 3:1, in which Paul describes the end times as “perilous.” In the original Greek, Litke says, Paul actually wrote that in the last days “there will be *chalepoi* times.’ That Greek word is the same adjective as was used to describe the outbursts of anger that were so alarmingly dangerous to those around Clearchus.”

Litke goes on to explain that “the angry outbursts of that general of old provide us with a window into what we may expect to be an important characteristic of the end times. ... In the last days, we can expect to see human beings exhibiting *unusual outbursts of anger toward one another* – the kind of anger that *endangers peoples’ lives.*”

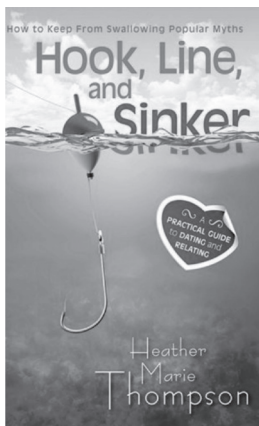
Is this type of anger, or rage, evident today? It seems we can answer that question simply by turning on the evening news or picking up a daily newspaper. Without Litke’s knowledge and expertise in history and ancient languages, however, this nuance would be lost to the average reader.

What Jesus Really Meant is an easy read, and yet quite compelling. A few free evenings should be sufficient time to peruse its pages cover to cover, and the enlightening insights will claim the reader’s attention.

Having a better understanding of controversial Bible texts will not only enhance discussions with others on these topics, but it will also guide the reader to a stronger understanding of how people lived and thought during the era that the four Gospels and other New Testament books were written. And when we have a more complete grasp of the nuances in God’s Word, we also can develop a greater comprehension and appreciation of His character.

*All Bible texts are taken from the New King James Version.

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**Hook, Line and Sinkers:
How to Keep from
Swallowing Popular
Myths**

by Heather Marie Thompson
(Hagerstown, Maryland:
Autumn House Publishing, 2011;
paperback)

Reviewed by Lorena Finis Mayer

This book is neither a literary essay nor an intellectual discussion about male-female relationships. It is the passionate cry from a big sister on a mission. She wants to tell her younger sisters involved in the dating and waiting game: “I hope you will learn from my mistakes” (p. 62).

Heather Marie Thompson talks rather than writes. As you read her book, you have the impression of being close to her, listening to what she has to say. And she has much to say about the dos and don'ts in dating. She generously describes her feelings and experiences, frustrations and discoveries over the years. And she comes to a bittersweet conclusion: “For me, this book was everything I wish my big sister would have written down and handed me before I started high school” (p. 88).

Thompson reminds her sisters that many times women look for their life soul mate in the wrong places or with the wrong attitudes and/or expectations. To drive her point home, she uses an allegory throughout the book: “There is a big difference between a lightning bug and a lightning bolt.” The first stands for men who don't really mean much to the woman but somehow are expected to fill a void. Even though Thompson loves the real lightning bugs and has fond memories of them (chapter 7), she pleads mercy on the figurative ones and encourages her sisters not to settle for less than the best. This “best” is what she calls the lightning bolt: the man with whom one can experience true and mature love.

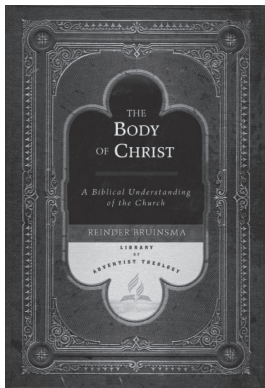
To see the difference, she calls for perspective. It's not just aiming to be happy or to enjoy a romance like the ones portrayed in the movies. It's not about seeking to feel better about oneself or to fulfill one's desires. She repeatedly says that women very often fool themselves in this important area of life. So she asks her sisters to stop and reflect on what is really important to them: first, in their life and, second, in the relationship they would love to have with their spouses. And above all, she reminds that the best counselor any woman can have is God. When He is truly factored in, one can be safe.

Very down-to-earth, everyday, difficult dating issues have their place in Thompson's testimony: jealousy, unreal expectations, real incompatibilities, the meaning of dressing or undressing, one-way relationships, moving too fast or too slow, cheating, messing with break-ups, sex before marriage, etc. She's been there and done that, and one cannot but admire her willingness to make herself vulnerable and publish her past mistakes. Now she has come to respect and truly love herself. And so she encourages – no, she *urges* – her sisters to see how much value they have and how much they need to respect themselves and have others respect them.

Thompson uses many superlatives, and her utterances may sound exaggerated sometimes, but this is perhaps a sign that she is on a passionate mission: to help her sisters not to swallow popular dating myths and to let God guide them in their love life. “I am telling you this because if I can save one person from the emotional ruin I have found myself in over and over again, then everything I went through was worth it” (p. 91).

This book may not be a literary essay or an intellectual discussion about female-male relationships, but it invites women looking for their soul mate to get practical on their thoughts about these relationships. This personal testimony may provide food for thought and help readers to have a clearer picture of the issues discussed.

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**The Body of Christ:
A Biblical Understanding
of the Church**
by Reinder Bruinsma
(Hagerstown, Maryland: Review
and Herald Pub. Assn., 2009; 222
pages; hardcover).

Reinder Bruinsma has filled a great void in Adventist theological discussion. For years, scholars and students have felt a need for an in-depth and scholarly discussion of the nature and mission of the church as the Body of Christ. Most of the recent discussions in Adventist theology – such as the role of the church in the wider community; the mission of the church at a time when ecumenism has become normative; the theology of ordination, including that of women; worldwide organization and ministry; tithing; etc. – have called for a proper Scriptural understanding of the church. Ecclesiology is foundational to adequate appreciation of the mission, authority, and organization of the church. Against this background, Bruinsma fills a void and fills it well.

The book is quite thorough in its approach. It begins with biblical foundations for a correct understanding of the church, covering in three chapters the Old and New Testament roots, and themes and metaphors that clarify the meaning and mission of the church. The author also deals with “The ‘Marks’ of the Church,” “The Spirit in the Church,” “The Government of the Church,” “The Doctrine of the Church in History,” and “The Church and Social Justice.” Adventists will be particularly interested in the author devoting four chapters to discussing the issues of “Ordination,” “One Church for All?,” “The Mission of the Church,” and “The Future of the Church.”

Bruinsma provides a useful background by discussing the present condition of mainline churches and other religious trends. He notes that while mainline churches are shrinking, Evangelical and charismatic churches continue to grow. Geographically speaking, while membership in places such as Australia, Canada, and Europe is shrinking, it is growing in countries such as Philippines, Brazil, and Mexico. Evangelism also seems to thrive in India and African countries. These areas of new growth tend to be more conservative than elsewhere.

In the context of such geographic changes, Bruinsma points out that Adventists’ focus on mission from the start has been encouraging. Over the past 50 years, the ratio of Adventist membership to world population has increased from 1:2500 to 1:425 (p. 178). In some areas, such as Australia, the denomination has registered a meager growth of 0.6% between 1991 and 2000. From 2001 to 2009, however, Adventists in Australia increased by a total of 7.8% (from 50,696 to 55,010). In Canada, which has a total church attendance across all denominations of only 20% (to the United States’ 40%), Seventh-day Adventists during the period 2001 to 2009 increased by a total rate of 16.8%.

Elsewhere, growth has been explosive. Currently, Seventh-day Adventism is one of the fastest-growing denominations in the world. According to Bruinsma, “if current growth rates continue, the church may well have at least 50 million members by 2025” (p. 17).

Bruinsma’s theological and Scriptural arguments favor the idea of ordaining women to ministry (chapter 8). His views on ecumenism are balanced and even-handed, with both encouragement and caution (chapter 10). His concept of mission emphasizes that “salvation is only through Christ. People need to hear the gospel and must respond” (p. 182). His vision for the future of the church (chapter 13) is that there is a remnant, but that “the harvest will be astounding” (p. 202).

Overall, the book makes a solid contribution to Adventist ecclesiology. Scholars, Bible teachers, and lay members will find in the book a biblical and readable exposition on a current and important topic.

LOGOS

The wonder of water: A challenge to evolution?

Without water, the profusion of life that exists on Earth would not be possible.

by Hugo García

For decades, a worldwide struggle has been surreptitiously fought. An important part of humanity is unaware that such a conflict is taking place. In this fight, there are neither armed troops nor military preparations. In fact, its weapons are basically ink, paper, and the audiovisual and electronic media. As you can well imagine, this is an ideological battle: namely, to determine the origin of human life and species.

Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, published more than 150 years ago, is the starting point of this controversy in modern times, and it has given rise to a worldwide debate on the origins of life as we know it. The choices have been narrowed down to basically two options: creation and evolution. The former advocates that life and the universe came into existence as a result of planning and execution carried out by an intelligent being. The latter holds that the existence of millions of living species is the result of mere chance, a natural consequence of natural laws, without the intervention of any kind of external agent. The battle involves the interpretations of the evidence that each side of the divide puts forward to make its case.

The controversy on the origins is focused on living beings; however, even in the inanimate world we can find evidence of planning and design. Let us refer specifically to an unlikely example: water. Why is water so essential for human existence? The answer can be found both in the physical and chemical properties of water.

A liquid like no other

Throughout its scientific endeavors, humanity has synthesized countless liquids, mostly as a result of developments in organic chemistry. Out of this science, liquids such as acetone, acetic acid, chloroform, benzene, and ether have been produced. However, not one of them can be compared to water. The beautiful blue coloration that adorns our planet when observed from space comes from the water that fills the oceans covering two-thirds of the surface of Earth.

Some of the properties of water in its pure state are extremely well known: water is colorless, odorless, and tasteless. Liquids in general have some other properties, which can be quantified in a laboratory. When compared to the measurements of other liquids, water exceeds those liquids and even some solids.

An outstanding temperature moderator

If you have ever been at the beach on a sunny day, you may have noticed that wet sand is not as hot as dry sand. This is the result of an impressive quality of water: its high thermal capacity.¹ If we take water and other substances and apply heat to each one of them under similar conditions, we will see that water does not heat as fast as the others. The caloric capacity of water is higher. The sand, the earth's surface, and rocks heat up faster. In deserts, days are hotter and nights cooler if compared to places close to large bodies of water. This outstanding property of water, combined with its abundance on the surface of the earth, makes water act as a giant temperature moderator that keeps temperatures on the planet within a range that favors the ongoing development of life.

A providential capacity of flotation

If we place a piece of solid aluminum on liquid aluminum that has been melted at high temperatures, we will see that the solid piece will drop to the bottom, because it has a higher density. No matter the substance, if we repeat the experiment with a solid piece and melted liquid of the same substance, the result will always be the same: since its density is higher, the solid will always drop to the bottom of its own liquid.

But water in solid form (ice) does not sink; it floats. Imagine a large body of water during winter. As the water freezes on the surface because of the effect of cold air, one would expect frozen water to sink and deposit at the bottom; more ice would form on the surface, and the process would repeat endlessly from the bottom upwards until all kinds of aquatic life would be destroyed.

Providentially, that is not the case; in fact, when freezing, water molecules adopt a crystalline pattern that covers

a larger area, which gives frozen water a lower density and makes ice float. The lower body of water stays liquid, since ice acts as an insulating agent and makes further freezing more difficult. This anomalous flotation of frozen water protects aquatic life under the frozen surface.

Moreover, water also dissolves oxygen from the air so that fish and other aquatic living beings are able to breathe and survive.

Blood, sweat, and sap

Water is properly called the universal solvent, since it can dissolve many salts and other substances. This is essential for all living creatures – even for microscopic ones – since it is the means by which molecules of substances inside their cells react. The smooth running of every single living creature depends on these reactions in a watery medium. Thus, from ancient times, dehydration has been used as a means of food preservation, because without water, microorganisms corrupting food cannot survive.

Human beings and animals alike depend on a system of internal transportation to carry nutrients to their cells and to collect waste substances produced by them. Blood is the agent in charge of carrying out this double purpose. Its red corpuscles pass through the lungs and collect oxygen, which is then distributed throughout the body. That is why, when a living creature loses blood, within a short while its existence is compromised. The effectiveness and operation of this wonderful liquid substance is based in water, its solvent base.

When we exercise vigorously, our muscles produce excess heat, which has to be removed in order to preserve the internal temperature of the body. To this end, we possess a cleverly-designed system. Physical exercise produces the formation of small drops of sweat on our skin. This body liquid, also water-based, removes a lot of heat,² evaporating and refreshing us in

the process. Thus, water contributes to efficient regulation of body temperature.

Plants also depend on water for their survival. They do not have a heart or a circulatory system as animals and humans do, but they possess an impressive mechanism for absorbing water and nutrients from the soil through their roots up to great heights, against gravity, even reaching the crowns of the highest trees. We still cannot understand fully the amazing mechanism, which is nevertheless interpreted through the coheso-tension-transpiratory theory, based on the properties of water. The surface tension and the water traction tension combine to propel radical sap through the tiny woody vessels up to 250 and even 300 feet, to the top of the highest trees. The evaporation of water inside the leaves, combined with the high cohesive strength of water, helps to suck the sap up to great heights. The high levels of surface tension, traction tension, and the cohesive strength of water are combined to create an amazing botanic force which makes the existence of the majestic sequoias and other tall trees possible.

A high boiling point

When heated, every liquid persistently reaches a threshold temperature that becomes its boiling point.³ A liquid in a pure state will always boil at the same temperature. Thus, the boiling point can be used, together with other properties, to identify an unknown liquid. Water has a boiling point which is almost 200°C higher than the score predicted according to the periodic table.⁴ If such is not the case, water could not exist as a liquid in this planet but as a vapor, and thus, neither blood nor sap would be possible. Cells would not exist either, because without water, the essential chemical reactions would be impossible. Thus, the exceptionally high boiling point of water makes life possible on this planet.

A true water of life

There is a curious aspect related to water: heavy water. It is well known that each molecule of water has two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen (as expressed in the formula H_2O). In heavy water, the two atoms of hydrogen are substituted by two atoms of deuterium, a heavy isotope of hydrogen. The new formula is D_2O . In every sample of water, there is a molecule of D_2O for every 7,000 molecules of H_2O , which is a very low ratio. However, scientists can produce heavy water which is almost 100 per cent D_2O , to be used in nuclear reactors as a neutron moderator. Heavy water is similar to regular (or light) water, but its properties are quantitatively superior. What is truly surprising about heavy water is that seeds soaked in it do not germinate, and mice that just drink heavy water die of thirst.

Literally, water is life. Where there is no water, there is no life. Period. In deserts where water is scarce, living beings are scarce too. But where there is abundant water, as is the case in tropical rainforests, there is abundance of life everywhere. Thus, life proves to be directly proportional to the existence of water. And in fact, every single creature is composed mostly of water – from 70 to 95 per cent of every living matter. The correlation between water and life is so close that when astronomers discover water in any planet, they speculate that life could also be found there.

Water refutes Darwinism

Our blue planet is unique. Astronomers have reported the existence of icecaps on Mars and in some of the moons in our solar system. However, these celestial bodies do not possess water in its liquid state. And there is no doubt that other planets and moons cannot hold water, either because they are too hot (and consequently, could only have water present in the form of vapor) or because they are too cold (and so water could

be present only as ice). On the other hand, the mild climate of Earth makes it possible for water to be present in the three states of matter.

Sheer chance, which is the base of Darwinian thought, is not able to explain convincingly the co-existence in our cosmic residence of the long list of factors which are essential for life. Among them, we could mention, besides the extraordinary water, the right distance from the sun, an ideal range of temperatures, and the presence of an atmosphere with an adequate concentration of oxygen. It is very unlikely that a series of fortunate accidents could ever produce a system so perfectly adjusted for life like the one we are able to enjoy here on this planet. It is even less rational to think that as a chemical substance, water has “evolved” so as to reach its current properties, which are in fact essential for the presence of life. It is impossible for inanimate matter to become an active part in evolutionary processes. The possible explanation for the existence of such an extraordinary substance as water is that it was designed to maintain and support life.

Ordinary but special

In spite of being quite ordinary, water still is extraordinary. Its ability to evaporate easily from oceans and lakes and to condense in clouds that eventually turn to rain makes up an immense distillation system which provides pure water, essential for life.

Chemists know that the unusual properties of water are caused by the ability of molecules of water to form “hydrogen bridges.” When the properties of water are quantitatively compared with the properties of other substances, the first are usually higher. Without its great thermal properties, high heat of vaporization level, unusual floatability in its solid state, high boiling point, superior surface tension, high traction tension, and impressive molecular cohesion, among others, no living creature could dream

of surviving. Really, water is a chemical substance made accurately and perfectly for life.

The importance of water exceeds our daily needs of cooking, drinking, and washing. Water is a magical substance that prompts seeds out of their slumber into germination. Health is closely related to water. Water inside and water outside the body is a simple and inexpensive recipe to prevent unknown numbers of illnesses.

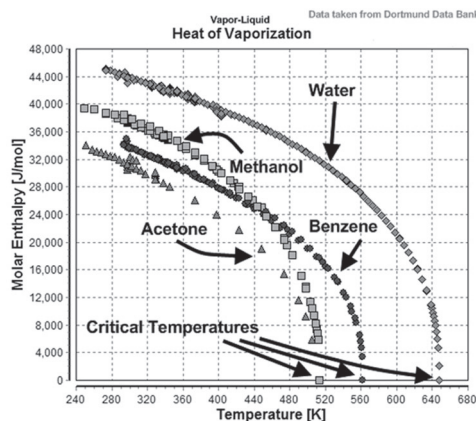
This amazing liquid is an additional link in the chain of pieces of evidence that creationism uses to assert that life, our planet, and the universe have been designed by an intelligent being.

Truly, in our planet, life is everywhere. And without water, this profusion of life would not be possible. In the battle over origins, Darwinism cannot offer a convincing explanation when advocating for the random emergence of life and matter, including water. When we stop to analyze the amazing properties of water, we cannot but single out major pieces of evidence, which all support creationism.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The thermal capacity is the quantity of heat necessary to produce a unit change of temperature in a unit mass of a substance. The thermal capacity of water is between 2 and 30 times higher than that of other substances.
2. When evaporating, every gram of water subtracts 540 calories from the body, a substantial quantity of heat.
3. Boiling points change in altitude; that is why it is usually calculated at sea level.
4. This can be visualized if we use a chart to show the boiling point of the hydrides of the elements of the oxygen group (water is “oxygen hydride”) in the periodic table against their atomic number.



ACTION REPORT

Three hundred youth meet in Paris for AMiCUS convention

by Barna Magyarosi

The Franco-Belgian Union hosted the 5th International AMiCUS Congress of the Euro-Africa Division in the Espace Charenton Congress Center in Paris, September 22-24, 2011. The theme of the event was triggered by a general interest in today's world toward an eventual doomsday in 2012 according to a particular Mayan calendar. In a society in which confusion, fear, or indifference reign regarding the end of the world, the organizers of the event decided to offer Bible-based information not only related to the end-time events, but especially to how we – as Christians waiting for the second coming of Christ – are supposed to live a committed life in light of the approaching event.

The event – “Arise in the End!” – gathered well-known speakers: Dwight K. Nelson (senior pastor, Pioneer Memorial Church), Roy Gane (professor, Andrews University), Cindy Tutsch (associate director, Ellen G. White Estate), Timothy Standish (researcher, Geoscience Research Institute), and Felix Cortez (professor, Montemorelos University).

The congress opened with a presentation by Dr. Felix Cortez on how to understand and approach the Mayan prophecies about the end of the world, emphasizing that while the self-fulfilling predictions were not able to tell the future, Jesus, through His sacrifice for us, already owns our future. The question is: are we willing enough to entrust our life into His hands?

Dr. Roy Gane continued the series of plenary sessions by pointing out that Elijah message and the third angel's message call for love as essential preparation for Christ's second coming. Through His Holy Spirit, the Lord freely gives love that brings people into harmony with Himself, unifies them (parents and children, wife and husband, brothers and sisters), and thereby testifies that Jesus has come to save the world. Consequently, we need a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit just before Christ comes again, which will provide a special measure of love for those who accept the Lord's end-time messages. Love shown by God's people attracts others to Him as its source and empowers Gospel witness, making salvation of others our top priority, whatever the cost.

On Friday evening, Dr. Cindy Tutsch illustrated Ellen G. White's ongoing relevance regarding such issues as the global economy, questions about 9/11, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, close of probation, and individual as well as corporate preparation for the final crises.

Saturday began with a round table discussion by the special guests, triggered by students' questions regarding the end of time. The sermon hour featured Dr. Dwight Nelson on the Issachar factor. He challenged the students to have a “fox” mentality rather than a “hedgehog” attitude, which is, to be alert to the signs of the times and be open to seeing not only the events that are happening around us but also

the trends these indicate. At the appeal by Dr. Nelson, more than 30 young people dedicated their lives to Jesus and to take God seriously.

More than 300 students attended the congress, representing most of the countries of the Euro-Africa Division and their respective local chapters of AMiCUS. The leaders of student organizations had a special meeting where they could share their experiences and challenges. They also planned for a future training convention for new AMiCUS leaders, which would project the vision of what AMiCUS can be, and plan to better serve the needs of Adventist students on secular campuses.

The congress concluded with a presentation by Dr. Timothy Standish on the significance of creation for Adventists. The biblical-creationist worldview provides a coherent and beautiful understanding of the world in which we live, the redemption God has won for us, and the future we look forward to. By controlling our past, the Creator God holds in His hand our present and future. There is something beyond the end. In fact, we are not waiting for the end, but for what is coming after it: God's new creation!

It was a moving experience to listen to all the participants confessing their belief in the soon second coming of Jesus through the well-known song: “We have this hope that burns within our heart.” Many of the young adults confessed that they came to the event attracted by what Paris could offer to them. However, they left with a strong determination to “Arise in the end!” and to recommit their lives to God and to the service of those who also need to discover the blessed hope we have.

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More than 300 young people attended the Convention.



Dr. Dwight Nelson during his workshop: "The John the Baptist Generation."



A panel discussion. From left to right: Barna Magyarosi (EUD Education Director), Timothy Standish (Geoscience Research Institute), Cindy Tutsch (E. G. White Estate), Roy Gane (Andrews University), Felix Cortez (Montemorelos University), and Stefan Sigg (EUD Youth Director).



The group of speakers, organizers, and some guests visiting Paris.



Altar call: 30 young people accepted Jesus.



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