

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY
DIALOGUE

English • French • Italian • Portuguese • Spanish

33
number 3



Life and health:
It's your choice

Job: Faith, suffering,
and the reality of God

Protection against
end-time pandemics



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CONTENTS



5

LIFE AND HEALTH: IT'S YOUR CHOICE

The Creator knew that our decisions impact not only our health, but also that of our descendants.

by Heidi Schulz



9

JOB: FAITH, SUFFERING, AND THE REALITY OF GOD

A look at how the Book of Job examines the ground of one man's faith and the reality of his God, and how the book attests to the justice of God and speaks hope to all who suffer.

by Lael Caesar



13

PROTECTION AGAINST END-TIME PANDEMICS

The role of individual behavior is often overlooked in protecting health from pandemics. Moral, spiritual, and physical health are strengthened by understanding and living in harmony with God's moral and natural laws.

by Cesar Augusto Galvez

DEPARTMENTS

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|--|
| 3 | EDITORIAL
Living with a good conscience
by John M. Fowler | 28 | ACTION REPORT
Missionaries in their own backyard
by Martin Bernhardt |
| 17 | LOGOS
No second thought with God's decision
by Conrad Vine | 30 | PROFILE
Enoch Kanagaraj
Interview by Audrey Andersson |
| 20 | VIEWPOINT
I belong to another world
by Carlos Humberto Campitelli | 33 | BOOKS
Through Jesus' eyes: How the Christ of the New Testament interprets and unfolds the Old
Reviewed by Robert Osei-Bonsu |
| 23 | FIRST PERSON
Eleven problems, eleven blessings
by Alex Voos | | Design and catastrophe: 51 scientists explore evidence in nature
Reviewed by Suzanne Phillips |
| 25 | FOOTPRINTS OF FAITH
David Yaoxi Lin: How a mother's pledge raised a hero of faith
by Bruce W. Lo | | |

LIVING WITH A GOOD CONSCIENCE

“I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day” (Acts 23:1, NKJV).¹

It was a costly gold pen, gifted to me by a friend to mark a special occasion. Beautiful, sleek, and sentimental. Suddenly, it disappeared. I was quite disappointed, blaming myself for being so careless and for placing a temptation on the path of someone else. Or did I drop it at one of the many places I visited that morning? Or perhaps someone in the office thought a gift has mysteriously come his or her way? Perish the thought. I must not be so suspicious.

Eight days and two announcements later, the pen reappeared on my desk. Sentiment celebrated itself.

Conscience won out. The culprit returned the pen to me.

Ravi was the best surprise I had in a long time. He was shy, withdrawn, slow to speak, and gave the impression of being either dumb or dull. He would sit in his class, oblivious of what was happening around him. The promptings of the teacher or the compulsions of an aggressive environment in our theology class had no visible effect on him. Once a serious discussion on issues pertaining to theological heresy of the early church divided the class into two, but Ravi was found in neither. Yet when the examination time came, his test paper gave a total surprise. Clear theology, flawless marshalling of facts, lucid logic, reasoned arguments, supportive documentation—in all a perfect paper. He got an “A.” That surprise was years ago. But the best of surprises was yet to come. Just recently, I received a letter from Ravi: a confession that he cheated on that examination, long, long ago.

Conscience won out.

“Conscience,” says Ellen G. White, “is the voice of God, heard amid the conflict of human passions.”² It is the simplest, clearest, and the most obvious expression of the exalted character and dignity of human life, as opposed to every other form of life on earth. It is that which makes a human a person. It is, as it were, the fingerprint of God on the human soul, however strong or however faint that print may be.

A crocodile may eat a child for breakfast and bathe itself in the bounties of sunshine for the rest of the day without feeling a pinch of remorse. A monkey can light up a match and set fire to someone’s humble dwelling and go into a fit of gleeful laughter. A snake can strike a hundred times, and not once sense the difference between right and wrong. Yet the most

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

Volume 33, Number 3
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Dialogue affirms the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and supports its mission. The views published in this journal, however, are the independent thoughts of the authors.

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hardened human criminal at one time or the other, within or outside the bounds of a prison, has to suffer the pangs of a wounded conscience.

Studies show that conscience expresses itself before, during, and/or after a particular action. *Before* the act, it encourages us to carry out the intended rightful action or advises us to reject the wrongful thought. *During* the act, especially when the act is a questionable one, conscience is found to be the weakest. We are either persistently defying the directives of our conscience, or we are so preoccupied with the act that conscience finds itself neglected or stifled. *After* the act, conscience may be aroused again in a strong way, either expressing satisfaction at what was done or insisting on remorse and rehabilitation.

A conscience continually wounded, stifled, neglected, or defiled can eventually become sluggish, down to a point where the distinction between moral and immoral, right and wrong, can be erased. The moral judgment of the “I” upon the “I” will be found lacking or erased, and the individual comes under a deep moral delusion. This is one reason why the Bible asserts that Christians must cultivate their conscience to a point where it will be good before God (Acts 23:1), “without offense toward God and men” (Acts 24:16), pure (1 Timothy 3:9), and sacred (1 Timothy 1:5). Only then can one assert the humanness of a person, on the one hand, and the divine dignity gifted to a human being, on the other.

Humans are human only when they honor and live within the context of God in which they are created. That context is searching, finding, and living within “the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you” (2 Corinthians 1:12).

How can one possess such a conscience? The Latin origin of the word *conscience* give a clue: The root word, *conscientia*, means “to know with.” Thus, conscience

is not merely knowing, but knowing with someone or something. Christians must assert that they in their conscience know together with Someone, who is over and above themselves. Their conscience is under the command or in tune with Someone whose will is supernatural, supramundane, and unchanging—in short, functions under the will of God. “They are to give the conscience the place of supremacy that has been assigned to it. The mental and physical powers, with the affections, are to be so cultivated that they can reach the highest efficiency.”³

As long as human will is in communion and companionship with the will of God, the conscience of such a person has found both its center and circumference. Such a person knows not only who he or she is and who that person ought to be. The ideal and the real converge in the conscience of such a person, obedient to its divine source. ☪

John M. Fowler

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LIFE AND HEALTH IT'S YOUR CHOICE

HEIDI SCHULZ

DOES LIFESTYLE IMPACT OUR OFFSPRING?

In February 2001 a draft sequence of the human genome was published, bringing great hope that this would usher in a new era for medicine. But in the past few years, the predicted life expectancy of babies born in developed countries is reduced compared to those born the first 15 years of this century.¹ How can this be? Could our lifestyle have anything to do with it?

The first hints came from a study carried out by Bygren, Kaati and Edvinsson.² They used records from Överkalix, Sweden, an area quite isolated from the outside world in the 19th century. Therefore, the inhabitants had to get by almost exclusively with the food produced locally. Using the food supply and death records, researchers found that if the grandfather did not have an abundance of food between his ninth and 12th years of life, the grandsons had a health advantage. On the contrary, an excess of food during that period reduced the life expectancy of his male grandchildren

The Creator knew that our decisions impact not only our health, but also that of our descendants.



between 6 and 32 years. In the case of women, a key time-point was pregnancy. The grandchildren of expectant mothers who had an adequate supply of nutrients fared better.

Now, think about the abundance of food and quality to which youngsters have access these days, and draw your conclusions. Numerous medical advances and new therapies are developed each year. Nevertheless, in developed countries, life expectancy has begun to decrease. Could this have something to do with our lifestyle? Or with Exodus 34:7: The Lord “punishes the children and their children for the sins of the fathers to the third and the fourth generation” (NIV).³

Well, maybe we have a clue here. The Creator knew that our decisions impact not only our health, but also that of our descendants. And He shared this explicitly with us to make us conscious of the responsibility we have. It is our life, our freedom, our choices—but they have an impact on others.

Ellen White stated: “Many are suffering in consequence of the transgression of their parents. They cannot be censured for their parents’ sin. . . . [W]herein their parents’ habits were wrong, they should change their course, and place themselves by correct habits in a better relation to health.”⁴ But, how do choices impact our lives and our descendants?

EPIGENETICS—THE BRIDGE BETWEEN LIFESTYLE AND HEALTH

Conrad Hal Waddington was the first to recognize in 1942 that to function, cells not only need genes, which can be compared to the hardware of a computer, but also specific “software” to function properly. To describe this concept, he coined the term *epigenetics*. *Epi* indicating that there is information “on top of” the genes, which is essential to control and regulate which of the 22,000 genes found in each of our cells will be accessible for use. There isn’t a single cell that uses the information contained in all these genes; thus, it is important that only those genes that are needed can be accessed and are “readable.” All others must remain “muted” or inaccessible.

In contrast to the fixed “letters” of the DNA sequence that conform our genes, most epigenetic marks can be changed during our life in response to environment and lifestyle. And this regulation can be just as or even more important for our health than the quality of the genes we have inherited! To date, three epigenetic processes are known to act as the bridge between lifestyle and cellular processes:

- **The first epigenetic mechanism: methylation.** The first way to “shut down” a gene is to put a mark on the cytosine, one of the four “letters” of the DNA. For this, it is necessary to have enough “ink” and the associated enzymes to accomplish the marking. When an “ink blot” (a methyl group) is placed on a gene, the information contained in this gene cannot be read, copied, or used to produce the encoded protein. Diet plays a major role in methylation, as a sufficient supply of certain nutrients is needed to produce

the “ink.” On the other hand, drinking alcohol perturbs the correct functioning and leads to suboptimal functioning. Recent studies support the idea that for optimum health, it is better not to drink any alcohol at all.⁵

Studies in humans have shown that diet is just one of multiple factors—from exercise, to the seasons, to fresh air—that lead to changes in methylation. For example, a study of healthy people showed that cycling for 45 minutes four times a week for three months resulted in a significant change in the activity of more than 800 sites and significant differential expression of approximately 4,000 genes in the leg muscles by modifying the methylation.

Everyday products can lead to abnormal methylation. An example of this is Bisphenol A (BPA), which is used in the manufacture of many plastics. It is also found in thermal cash receipts, inside the lining of some metal cans, and produced when the dental composite resins used to treat caries hardens. Studies show that 93 percent of us eliminate BPA in urine, which means that we have absorbed it orally or through the skin. This estrogen-similar molecule is an endocrine disruptor and leads to changes in methylation of key processes. It increases the risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, some types of cancer, polycystic ovary syndrome, and it alters thyroid function and sex hormone concentrations. It also reduces male sexual function and sperm quality. BPA exposure during pregnancy and in childhood is associated with neurodevelopmental problems and correlates with higher levels of anxiety, depression, hyperactivity, inattention, and conduct problems.⁶ Its effects are not limited to the person exposed, but may also affect descendants. For example, exposure of male mice to BPA disrupted the production of sperm and led to a decline in sperm count, not only in the exposed generation, but also in sons, grandsons, and to some degree in great-grandsons.

Recognizing this health threat, some countries have banned BPA from specific products, but generally only those used by babies. Because of potential risks, it is recommended to buy food products packed in BPA-free materials, and one should be careful not to store, heat, or cool food in plastic containers, and avoid handling receipts, in order to limit exposure to this substance.

As in most areas of medical research, the majority of studies related to epigenetics are done in animal models because of the ease of manipulation, shorter lifespans, and the possibility to control test conditions. Most of the time, results observed in animal studies translate to observations in humans.

One such animal model, the agouti mouse, was used to study the effect of diet during pregnancy on methylation.⁷ The study showed that an abundance of methyl donors in the maternal diet is needed to methylate the agouti gene in the pup. If there are not sufficient nutrients for optimal methylation of this gene during pregnancy, the gene is not turned “off” as it should during development and the mice have yellow fur and a predisposition to obesity, diabetes, and cancer. On the

other hand, a maternal diet rich in folic acid, betaine, choline, and vitamin B₁₂ resulted in healthy pups with normal fur color even though the mother had the described symptoms. Pups of pregnant mothers that did not receive sufficient nutrients had the described health problems and yellow fur.

Even social contacts influence the expression of genes. In this case, using rats that experienced different maternal care behaviors are impressive.⁸ Offspring that received the necessary attention grew up as confident animals, while neglected animals had a changed response to stress stimuli. Investigations on humans corroborate that what they experience leaves an epigenetic imprint and can influence their mental well-being and behavior. For example, there are measurable epigenetic differences in the blood cells of people who have suffered childhood abuse, even when measured 40 years after the episode.⁹

Constant stress can lead to depression. However, studies show that physical activity lessens depression risk by removing methylation marks from a gene in muscle cells. The now active gene encodes an enzyme that adds an acid group to kynurenine, a molecule generated when people experience stress. As the resulting kynurenic acid is too large, it is no longer able to migrate from the blood into the brain, and therefore stress will have a smaller impact on the mental well-being.¹⁰

In a study of rats, an enriched environment that included exposure to novel objects and voluntary exercise during adolescence improved memory not only in the mouse experiencing it, but also in its future offspring, even if the offspring never experienced the brain-stimulating environment.¹¹ Such studies are difficult to do on humans, but they hint that enhanced environments and activities that influence neural plasticity positively are not only beneficial for us but might contribute to a more positive development in our descendants—as the epigenetic changes in the animal model occur not only in the brain of the animal experiencing it but also in his sperm or her eggs.

• **Second epigenetic mechanism: histone changes.** Whether a cell can use the information contained in a gene is also regulated by controlling the accessibility to the genes that need to be “read” and copied in order to make the proteins. Due to the limited space in the cell nucleus, only some segments of chromosomes are loose and legible at a given timepoint. Vast stretches of the approximately 2 meters of DNA typically found within human cells are not needed most of the time. These unused stretches of DNA are therefore packaged to prevent tangling and other problems and to allow room for those segments of DNA containing genes that are in use to be expressed. This packaging state can be modified by making chemical changes to the histones, the protein “bobbers” around which the DNA is wrapped. It has been shown that not only good nutrition, but also a few minutes of meditation and many

other factors contribute to the optimal functioning of the histone-changing enzymes.

• **Third epigenetic mechanism: microRNA.** When a gene has been read and copied in the so-called messenger RNA, it is used as a blueprint to produce the encoded protein as long as it is intact. This “instruction” can be destroyed by the action of microRNAs (abbreviated miRNAs). As the name implies, miRNAs are very short. As soon as a miRNA finds a stretch of letters that mirrors its sequence in a messenger RNA, it will bind to it, and the messenger RNA is rendered unusable—thus halting the corresponding protein synthesis. While most miRNAs are active in the cell that produced them, a significant number of miRNAs are exported and circulate in the blood. As food consists of cells, a portion of the miRNAs found in food, especially animal products, are absorbed in the human digestive tract and may affect gene expression. For example, if the concentration of a certain miRNA found in broccoli, spinach, cabbage, carrot and onion is low in blood, women have a higher risk of breast cancer. If tumor cells are treated with this miRNA, tumor growth slows down.¹²

Epigenetics also plays a key role in addictions.¹³ Researcher Eric Nestler explains that stable changes in gene activity in nerves of the reward system are based, at least partially, on epigenetic changes. For instance, cocaine use leads to histone changes and causes the cells to switch on a different “program.” This happens not only with substance-related addictions (drugs and alcohol), but also with substance-independent addictions such as compulsive computer game playing. The latter leads to measurable changes in the concentration of some miRNAs in the blood. These miRNAs can, in turn, influence the activity of 1,300 genes, some of which are involved in various diseases such as schizophrenia or severe depression.¹⁴

EPIGENETICS THROUGHOUT LIFE

The first hours after fertilization, witness key epigenetic changes. Environmental and lifestyle factors during this time and throughout pregnancy, as well as childhood-related circumstances, lead to long-term changes that can not only predispose to disease decades later, but also affect the well-being of children and grandchildren. Thus, these may be considered critical periods. Recent studies show that early-life environments increased risk of type 2 diabetes later in life.¹⁵

RESPONSIBLE ONLY FOR YOURSELF?

Certain life experiences and environmental cues are “memorized” in sperm and eggs. Research from various laboratories have demonstrated that maternal and paternal characteristics, acquired even years before conception, can be passed on to the descendants.¹⁶ These include, among others, a high-fat diet, a low-protein diet, mental stresses, and odor sensitivity to specific chemicals.

Here are a few examples of multigenerational effects of lifestyle choices:

- In a study on mice, saccharin exposure produced locomotor hyperactivity and working memory deficit not only in the saccharin-exposed males but also in their offspring.¹⁷ Sperm DNA was hypermethylated in the saccharin-exposed fathers, especially at dopamine receptors, suggesting that epigenetic modification of germ cell DNA may mediate transmission of behavioral phenotypes.
- In another study, the offspring of stressed mice fathers exhibited hyperglycemia due to reduced production of a microRNA.¹⁸
- A Western-like diet (high fat and/or high sugar) increases the likelihood of obesity and diabetes in descendants. Recently, it was determined that a microRNA in the sperm leads to predisposition in the next generation. The injection of this microRNA into one-cell embryos is enough to induce metabolic alterations similar to the diet-induced phenotype.¹⁹
- Mice pups of fathers that inhaled nicotine before conception had attention deficit and fewer dopamine receptors.²⁰
- Increased risk of asthma due to lowered global methylation of sperm in children of parents and grandparents who smoked.

CONCLUSION

We began this article with a biblical reference to the multigenerational effects of sin (Exodus 34:7). We now conclude with the promise from verse 6: “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.”

Most health outcomes depend on our small, everyday decisions. As in retrieving wood blocks in a game of Jenga, the results will not be immediately visible in most cases, but a healthy lifestyle increases the probability of plentiful health not just for us but also our offspring. As Ellen White shared with us: “The use of natural remedies requires an amount of care and effort that many are not willing to give. Nature’s process of healing and upbuilding is gradual, and to the impatient it seems slow. The surrender of hurtful indulgences requires sacrifice. But in the end it will be found that nature, untrammelled, does her work wisely and well. Those who persevere in obedience to her laws will reap the reward in health of body and health of mind.”²¹ ☪

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JOB: FAITH, SUFFERING, AND THE REALITY OF GOD



LAEL CAESAR

According to the Center for Systems Science and Engineering at the Johns Hopkins University, COVID-19 related deaths by October 24, 2021 have reached more than 454,000 in India, more than 605,000 in Brazil, and in the United States, nearly 735,000. Globally, deaths number nearly five million with more than 243 million infected.¹

Raw numbers, of course, do not tell the whole story of deadly blows inflicted by the diminutive COVID virus on millions of people around the world—on their health, emotions, joy of life, social relations, family, and other elements of day-to-day existence. Vigor, youth, and brilliance notwithstanding, you may wish you could settle your score with COVID for all the graduations, the baptisms, weddings, church events, birthday parties, music concerts, or baby dedications that you have missed.

Overall, how much damage has the tyrant virus done to you, your parents, siblings, cousins, or uncles, and friends? And imagine what it has done to all the world's people, almost eight billion victims, violated in some way or other by a virus. Visualize again, *en masse*,

A look at how the Book of Job examines the ground of one man's faith and the reality of his God, and how the book attests to the justice of God and speaks hope to all who suffer.

all the people gasping for breath, compelling us all to recall so many sufferers dying of asphyxiation and other complications in a hospital, or in their own home, or in the makeshift constructions that have had to be erected as governments and citizenry strive to keep up with the invisible tyrant.

COVID-19 is not humanity's first encounter with sickness and calamity that was impossible to understand; nor is it the first to cause death beyond grief. Nevertheless, we are desperate to ask where, how, and how long ago suffering was first birthed—whether the anguish of the aged, drawing one last breath, the grief of the brokenhearted all alone, or the hard gasps of a woman in the pangs of childbirth. And why should pain be persisting, or indeed, multiplying and intensifying amidst us? And what are the prospects of an end to miseries that some jaundiced, some cynical, and surely, not a few sincere, call life?

WISDOM AND HUMAN EXISTENCE

Of the biblical narratives offer responses to these gnawing issues, the Book of Job is noteworthy. Students of biblical law, history, and prophecy sometimes suggest that these three disciplines, studied from a biblical rather than secular or philosophical perspective, provide all that humanity will ever need by way of information, instruction, and communication from God. The law stipulates what should be (God's commands); history narrates life's story (what transpires); and prophecy presents history's movement toward the future (what God says for the future).

Wisdom goes beyond life's narrative in search of its natural order, so its human actors may function more in synchrony with the mute but visible world. Wisdom brings the lived and the learned human experience to the challenge of continued human existence, a legacy often passed on in educative life settings where generations interact—whether youth and parent, or student and teacher.

Wisdom is “the Preacher”(Ecclesiastes 1:1, 2, NASB); (“the Teacher,” NIV). It is the voice still audible from previous generations, or preserved in text (Job 8:8–10; 15:10); it is the utterance and understanding of those who, by virtue of age, are counted sages, over against youth who, due to their lack of age, are conspicuously qualified to be silent (Job 32:4, 6, 7). Wisdom offers counsel for life. Wisdom brings together the best practices on matters of minor moment, like the best response to an ostensibly gracious dinner invitation; and issues of higher import, like the discretion demanded when cosigning a loan; and other matters, like administering government at the highest levels, where intelligence is more valuable than prosperity. The literary genre named Wisdom is one that poses questions: Wisdom wonders: How come life feels so frustrating? What follows after gratifying oneself in spirits and sex and song and stuff?

Wisdom brings the lived and the learned human experience to the challenge of continued human existence . . .

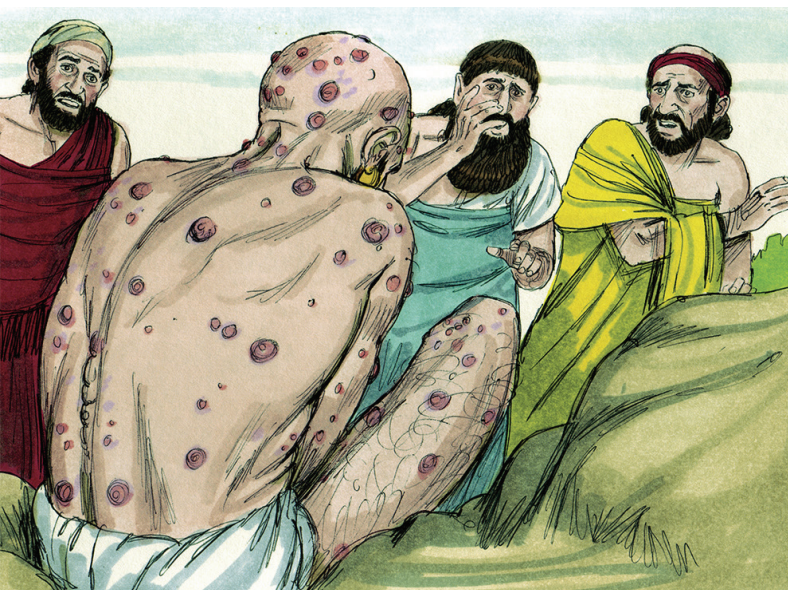
And Wisdom wrestles mightily over “why?” Why are the rich not the poor? Why do the fool and I have the same fate? What sense does that make (Ecclesiastes 2:15)? Why does brilliance seem, at times, to go unrewarded (Ecclesiastes 2:16)?

Wisdom wonders and wanders where experience fails to provide the confidence of any clear command (“Thou shalt not . . .”) and is unsatisfied with the facts of how things happened. Wisdom may fall short of the omniscience of prophecy, but the genre can also be more than prophecy—more reflective, more discursive, more open to a second opinion, or a third or a fourth.³

INTRODUCING JOB

Such a plurality of voices, ancient or immature, human or divine, natural or supernatural, inhabits and pervades the Book of Job—a book that would not be, if life were all controlled by omniscient inerrancy. In this book, unspeakable tragedy compels a tormented man to absorb the verbal bombardment of three (or is it four?) friends about why he is suffering. He rages against them and God for the cruelties the latter has allowed, cruelties his friends continually attempt to justify. Much of the friends' evaluations of, and proposals regarding Job's suffering, engender their own pain, all the more agonizing because these earnest thinkers and explainers are his friends and guests. They have journeyed from afar to make this visit. They have come because they and the world have heard of his adversity, briefly summarized.

To this tragedy of many stanzas they will add their own, a tragedy set in the context of a meeting of the divine court that is interrupted by an intruder. As matters proceed, the patriarch is callously deprived of all that he had: “seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and very many servants” and his children (see Job 1:1–19). The climax of the loss of children and the symmetry of their number, 10, together accentuate the inconceivable content of the narrative.



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But the horror is still incomplete. Job has yet more to lose when, as if by some unimaginably vile cosmic congruency, the cycle repeats: The divine court assembles again, where the Lord reigns over all. The intruder shows up again, is challenged again, exits the assembly again with new malice on his mind, and now pours it out on Job's physical person, which the Lord had previously protected. Satan now has access to Job's person, to which he administers personalized abuse because, he says, Job's faith in God is not credible; because, he argues, extreme torture is a fair way to expose one's true colors (Job 2:1-10).

Satan's next test will overrun Job's body with some revolting disease expressed as boils that cover him from crown to heel, turning him into a heap of vile smelling pus. His visitors may not have heard of his wife's response to his new, repugnant state. All told, whatever they have heard, for days they stare in silence at what they find.

But silence and stares are not the reasons for their journey: the visitors have "come to sympathize with him and comfort him" (Job 2:11). They do not know it, but their theological distortions will be the substance of Satan's intensifying tests. They will argue for God as supreme, nature as the inviolable expression of His purposes: God lays no store by His creation; they are hardly more than moths, creatures of fleeting lives (4:17-20). Thus spoke Eliphaz, the first friend. Next, Job's friend Bildad offers counsel: God has only "delivered" (NRSV)—wretchedly ironic term—Job's children "into the power of their transgression" (8:4, NRSV). The third friend, Zophar, is the coldest of

all: Job should not chafe at pain and rail against his Creator. Rather, he should welcome the brutality of his present treatment as his just deserts and repent of whatever sin has brought him this divine discipline. If he does not, he is only increasing his rebellion. Job ought to know that even now he deserves perhaps twice the thrashing God is giving him (11:6). They are three earnest, old men, and then comes a youth—Elihu, who seems to be Eliphaz's mentee. The person they came to console will repudiate them as "[m]iserable comforters" (16:2), literally "comforters of trouble."

Much praise has been poured on the literary nature of this work that features such dreadful loss and pain. Thankfully for whoever the story's survivors may be, there is final deliverance. Given its surfeit of misery, reactions are profuse: the Book of Job is "the greatest poem of ancient and modern times"⁴ with language of "majesty unequalled, unapproached, by the loftiest productions of human genius."⁵

The Book of Job is no movie. Its opening notes, focusing on one man, Job, are but the frame within which he experiences loss and abuse on a scale unequalled in the biblical record. The book tells of disorientation that tests the stability of family and collegial relationships, the ground of one man's faith and the reality of his God.

We meet that man as good—by narratorial introduction and divine confirmation: "My servant Job," testifies God. "There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil" (Job 1:8). Even with that divine pronouncement, all is not well with Job. An alien has appeared in God's court to cast doubt on His word and rule. God challenges the intruder: "From where do you come?" (Job 1:7). The verbal joust between the Lord and this distrusting challenger brings the drama down to earth, where Job is—where suffering is the rule rather than the exception.

Satan, the intruder into the divine court, is the opponent of life and joy, ready to dispute the Lord's sincerity in blessing His creation, and to torment those who would be recipients of such blessings. The confrontation sets up multiple contrasts, particularly that of integrity over against arbitrary power.⁶ Few truths in the Book of Job stand out with such stark clarity as this one. Through the book's own unadorned process of branding, the Hebrew label of *tām*, translated "blameless" or "perfect," is applied to only one character, Job. The book's subject of greatest deprivation, physical and verbal abuse, insult and contempt, is the only

person labeled, and repeatedly so, as blameless or perfect. Moreover, the most credible witness of all attests to Job's virtuousness. First, the omniscient narrator (1:1–5); then, the Lord—presiding over the divine court (v. 8); then, the Lord's repeated testimony concerning His human hero (2:3).

Job's story assaults the reader with its implied comment on the disturbing reality of injustice and ethical disequilibrium. We hear this argument when Job cries out for vindication, but justice tarries, and he is forced to contend that death may come first (Job 13:15; 19:25–27). And we hear the echo of our own profound frustrations when this virtuous man cries out, “Oh that I knew how to find Him, That I might come to His home! I would present *my* case before Him and fill my mouth with arguments” (Job 23:3, 4).

THE END

How many seekers after justice declare their faith in cause and effect? People say, “Be sure that your sin will find you out” (Numbers 32:23). And this is true. But when? Perhaps the greatest benefit Job's story offers to pandemic victims—or anyone who suffers today—is the way it limits the claim that one deserves what one gets. There is much pain that no one deserves; too much suffering disconnected from any act of one's own that might bring such agony. Believing that personal sin is hardwired to suffering, as inerrant cause and effect, leads millions to labor at working out their karma to overcome the errors of previous lives; to pay with penance that which will free them from the guilt of their sins. But reading the Book of Job makes us realize how unsound is the dogma that being good guarantees prosperity or that prosperity is proof of goodness. Reading the Book of Job helps us recognize that “time and chance overtake” everyone (Ecclesiastes 9:11); good people may still suffer; evil people may still thrive.

Reading the Book of Job makes it clear that COVID-19's millions of infected are not still standing because they are more righteous than the millions dead; nor does their illness prove they are worse than others of the world's inhabitants who may never become infected. The facts of COVID-19 quickly disabuse us of any such notion because we know how blurred the lines are. We do not know who will die next because their asymptomatic friend cheerfully welcomes them with deadly toxicity transmissible through his handshake or her breathing.

Some suffering and injustice can readily be traced from effect to cause. But the Book of Job and the genre of wisdom literature teach deference before the unpredictable attacks of sickness and death. They teach that suffering on earth is wrong and can be random, and that the God of life has committed Himself to making things right for us in the end. They teach that we, in the meantime, should choose mutual support over judgmentalism, self-examination over criticism of the Other, and empathy instead of condescending self-righteousness. They teach the discretion that can only come by realizing we are finite, and God is just. We need all these. And so, we still need the Book of Job and the wisdom it teaches.

“Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore get wisdom” (Proverbs 4:7, NKJV). ☞

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PROTECTION AGAINST END-TIME PANDEMICS:

A REFLECTION ON THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOR

CESAR AUGUSTO GALVEZ

The role of individual behavior is often overlooked in protecting health from pandemics. Moral, spiritual, and physical health are strengthened by understanding and living in harmony with God's moral and natural laws.

Seventh-day Adventists are a global faith community that proclaims salvation in Jesus Christ by faith, the spiritual kingdom of God on earth, keeps the seventh-day Sabbath and looks forward to the return of Jesus. While Adventists affirm a faith rooted in the Bible, they are also committed to a lifestyle that is founded in their belief that their bodies are the temple of God. To them, health and healthful living are a vital part of the Christian life and message. They hold that “health reform and teaching of health and temperance are inseparable parts of the Church’s message.”¹

This article explores the Adventist health message from both biblical and scientific perspectives, and underscores the blessing of that health message² for God’s people during the end-time pandemics.

A LIFESTYLE FOR GOD’S PEOPLE

The Bible teaches that the dynamics of health are closely linked to our obedience to the laws of God. Moses told the children of Israel at the doors of the long-awaited Promised Land: “If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the Lord your God will keep his covenant of love with you. . . . The Lord will keep you free from every disease. He will not inflict on you the horrible

diseases you knew in Egypt” (Deuteronomy 7:12, 15, NIV).³ Scripture shows that health is the reward of obedience to God’s laws, while sickness is often the result of disobedience to the same laws (Exodus 15:26; Deuteronomy 7:12, 15).

The Bible refers to at least two kinds of law. First the moral law, the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–17), define our relationship with God and with one another. Those who live in harmony with this law, by the power of its Author, will place themselves in a position for optimal spiritual, mental, and physical health. For example, those who keep the seventh commandment, “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14, NIV), will practice abstinence from sex before and outside of marriage. From a public-health perspective, this is the best way to prevent sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, and trichomoniasis, which are curable, and hepatitis B, herpes simplex virus, HIV, and human papillomavirus, which may be treated but are incurable.⁴ The reward for keeping the seventh commandment will be good reproductive health. Meanwhile, those who challenge this law by practicing an opposite behavior will be at higher risk of contracting STDs.

The second kind of law the Bible teaches is the natural law. God created the natural environment in six days (Psalm 33: 6–9). He is the Creator and Sustainer of the water, nitrogen and carbon cycles, among other processes, that keep life running in an appropriate balance, and He has defined laws that govern nature—including every cell, tissue, organ, and system of the body. When God formed humankind, He formed the approximately 206 bones,⁵ more than 650 skeletal muscles,⁶ around five million pores,⁷ and between 274 million and 790 million pulmonary alveoli.⁸ Science tries to show us how to care for this wonderful system God has created, and these laws are studied by biomedical researchers in the areas of anatomy, physiology, microbiology, molecular biology, and others.

Violation of these laws in either of the two categories jeopardizes human life and health. But how do human beings violate God’s laws? By ignorance, mistakes, negligence, and even by deliberate action. How can we live according to God’s laws? By completely surrendering ourselves to God and by being transformed by the Holy Spirit through a loving relationship with Him. Such a relationship would involve understanding His natural laws and making proper choices that are relevant to our moral, spiritual, and physical health.

God’s laws that affect the dynamics of health and disease were given to Israel around 1500 B.C. At that

time, most nations believed that health and disease were the result of the interactions by supernatural forces that were beyond human control. How revolutionary was the idea that God would place the dynamics of health and disease in the hands of people themselves! Health and sickness did not depend on supernatural forces or unknown causes, but on individual decisions and actions related to laws that the Creator had established, in effect saying: “If you live according to my laws, I will reward you with health; if you do not follow my laws, the natural result will be illness.” What’s more, God presented Himself to His people, saying, “I am the Lord, who heals you” (Exodus 15:26). Such was the lifestyle proposed by God, placing health and sickness to a great degree into human hands, dependent on people’s choices and practices. I say “to a great degree,” for the Holy Scriptures recognize that health and sickness may have other causes too, such as a test caused by Satan, which God allowed, to fulfill a bigger purpose in the context of the cosmic, universal, but invisible Great Controversy (Job 2:1–6), or an opportunity “so that the work of God might be displayed in his life” (John 9:1–7), as in the case of the blind man whose blindness was not the result of lifestyle nor from biological heredity.

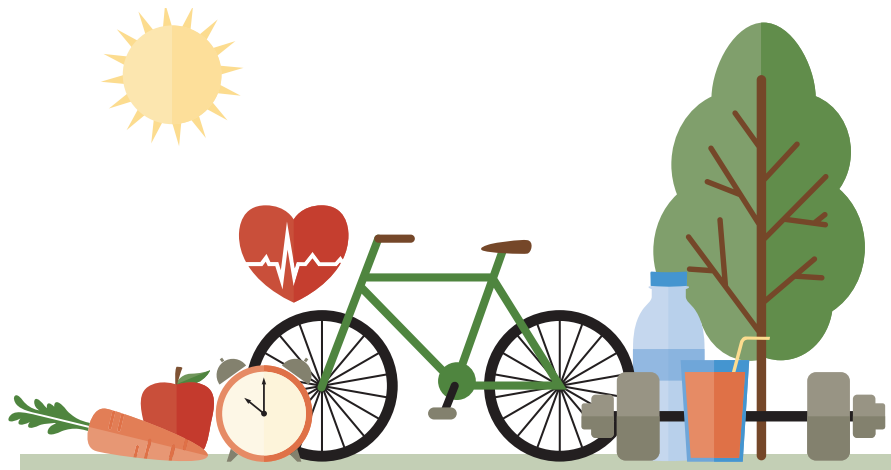
SCIENCE AND BIBLICAL LIFESTYLE

The biblical emphasis on the relationship between personal behavior and the dynamics of health and disease is corroborated today by science as we study the nexus between non-communicable diseases, such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, and others, and infectious diseases, such as COVID-19, influenza, and pneumonia.

According to the World Health Organization,⁹ cardiovascular diseases are the number one cause of death in the world. Each year, an estimated 17.9 million people die from cardiovascular diseases. Eighty-five percent of these deaths are attributable to heart attack or stroke.¹⁰ Even though WHO has set a goal of reducing premature deaths from noncommunicable diseases by 25 percent by 2025,¹¹ cardiovascular disease is projected to remain the number one cause of death in 2030.¹²

Cancer is the second leading cause of disease and mortality worldwide. In 2018, there were 18.1 million new cases diagnosed worldwide, and 9.6 cancer-related million deaths.¹³ By 2040, the number of new cancer cases per year is expected to rise to 29.5 million and the number of cancer-related deaths to 16.4 million.¹⁴

In short, these are the pandemics that kill more people than any other cause, including COVID-19. Currently heart attack, stroke, and cancer kill almost 25 million people each year. By 2030, the heart attack



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and stroke death toll will rise to 20 million, and by 2040 the cancer death toll will rise to 16.4 million. The victims will span all ages, and include rich and poor, educated and uneducated, from every part of the world. According to the European Center for Disease Control, COVID-19 killed more than 4,500 people per day in the world between March and May in 2020, at the peak of the pandemic's first wave.¹⁵ The peak of the second wave was in the second part of January with more than 17,000 deaths per day.¹⁶ In comparison, circulatory diseases, ending in heart attack and stroke, killed worldwide about 42,000 people per day, with cancer killing more than 26,000 per day! This is more than 68,000 a day dying just from circulatory diseases complications or cancer! While COVID-19 has become less deadly with the implementation of vaccines, circulatory diseases and cancer will likely increase their lethal power by 2030 and 2040, killing respectively 55,000 and 45,000 people every day.

To a great degree, the ultimate cause for the shared risk factors of NCDs and IDs are risk-related daily behaviors such as poor daily health habits, using tobacco products and drinking alcohol, absence of regular physical activity, excessive eating of animal-based/refined/sugary/salty food, a diet low in whole grains, fiber, seeds, nuts, fruits, raw and cooked vegetables, and inability to control stress.¹⁷ These bad habits, in addition to inadequate social conditions such as poverty, poor sanitation norms, and other inequities pave the way for and contribute to pandemics, suffering, and death. This is why *The Lancet* states: "governments should implement stricter tobacco, alcohol, and sugar controls, as well as focused investment in improving physical activity and healthy diets."¹⁸

Is this a mere coincidence? As discussed earlier, the Bible indicates that the dynamics of health and disease depend to a great extent on individual responsibility (obedience/disobedience to the laws of God) notwith-

standing the importance of public health initiatives and education. Science also demonstrates that vulnerability to, or protection from pandemics depends, to a large extent, on individual responsibility: everyday health/illness behaviors. The science of the 21st century and biblical revelation from 3,500 years ago show the same thing: Health and disease depend, to a great extent, on individual responsibility to obey or disobey the natural laws of God written in our entire being.

God designated the lifestyle of His people as part of their preparation for their entry into earthly Canaan. In these days, when the signs announce the return of Jesus Christ, God once again commends to His people the same lifestyle, through the Adventist health message, as the main means of protection from the causes of illness and death that today kill millions. Of course, this doesn't invalidate at all the preventive pandemic protocols recommended across nations. But a healthy lifestyle is part of the spiritual preparation for our entry into heavenly Canaan, and is an effective means of fulfilling the church's mission of proclaiming the gospel to all nations and cultural groups (Matthew 24:14).

The New Testament reinforces this lifestyle as part of the preparation of those awaiting the second coming of Jesus: "May the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23, NKJV). The entire being, including the physical, is sanctified by God Himself and preserved without blemish, through a lifestyle in harmony with His message of health, lived by His power.

GOD'S PEOPLE AND END-TIME PANDEMICS

In conclusion: Here are eight protective health habits, especially relevant for the end time. They are, of course, in addition to the appropriate preventive and protective protocols issued by health authorities for pandemics

and others public health emergencies. These protective health habits are based on current research and the writings of Ellen White, who systematized and applied the biblical message of health:

- Live in daily communion with Jesus through His Word, prayer, and service to others.
- Take care of your mental health by maintaining a positive attitude toward life and its challenges, and by managing stress appropriately by getting out into nature, nurturing supportive relationships, and engaging in volunteer activities and hobbies.
- Practice physical activity according to your capacity: walk for 35 to 45 minutes daily for six days a week or engage in aerobic exercise four days a week, and move about every hour for 5 to 10 minutes.
- Eat a good breakfast and avoid eating late at night.
- Consume low portions of or even better yet, abstain from animal-based, processed, refined, and fried foods as well as those that are high in fat and cholesterol, sodium, or sugar, and drinks containing large amounts of sugar or high-fructose corn syrup.
- Consume a balanced diet, making sure that a high proportion of your choices come from whole grains, legumes, nuts, fruits, seeds, sprouts, tubers, cooked and raw vegetables. Drink pure water.
- Go to bed early, and sleep eight to nine hours each night.
- Overcome substance or behavioral addictions by the power of God and through psychological counseling/therapy.

If you have a clean bill of health—that is, your waistline is under 88 cm if you are a woman or under 102 cm if you are a man, and you do not have diabetes, high blood pressure, cholesterol, or triglycerides, you can progressively implement these changes and improvements, starting with the easiest and working up to the more difficult. Adopt just one or two behaviors at a time until you experience their benefits, and they become a normal part of your life. Then add another healthy new behavior change. But if you have diabetes, cancer, or obesity, or have signs or symptoms of chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or high triglycerides, then, immediately seek advice from your physician, as you will need to implement these changes broadly and quickly. There is no time to lose. Rather, you need to make up the time in order to enjoy relief, reversal, and even healing of the diseases to enjoy abundant health. Doing your part, ask God for power to change, and accept the results according to His will. ☮

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NO SECOND THOUGHT WITH GOD'S DECISION

CONRAD VINE

Salvation is the overarching theme of God's Word. It not only reveals God's actions on our behalf, but those actions also profoundly express His character for the fallen and unfallen universe to understand.

Decisions often involve complex processes. "To be or not to be?" is the way Shakespeare phrased the complexity involved in decision making. At times, we find it easy to make big decisions but difficult to deal with minor ones. We may take weeks to agonize over a relatively insignificant decision while taking hardly any time on major issues such as which house to buy. Further, decision making is not always rational. Other issues influence the decision-making process: our emotions, our desires, the views of friends and peers, advertising, social influences, etc.

And when decisions are made, second thoughts often follow. Was this a wise choice? Could I have made a better decision? Did I need to make the decision in the first place? Was I too rash? Once a decision is made, we are forced to live with the consequences of our decision, even though second thoughts can return to torment us.

THE BIGGEST DECISION EVER MADE

But there is one decision made long, long ago about which there was no second thought. It is one decision that carried a finality. It is the decision made by God Himself. That decision is described in Genesis



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2:7: “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (NKJV).¹ According to Colossians 1:16 and John 1:3, Christ Himself was the Creator. And after the body was made out of the dust of the ground, and lay there lifeless, Jesus bent down to breathe into that lifeless form the “breath of life.”

What were the thoughts of Jesus at that moment? These hands would be capable of deeds of great kindness. These feet could walk long distances to serve others. This tongue could be used to sing God’s praises. These ears could be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. The heart could delight in God’s law. On the other hand, one day the feet of this human and/or his descendants would kick, their hands would murder, their eyes would lust. Their tongues would lie. Their will would close out the voice of conscience. Their brains would delight to dwell on that which is evil. Their heart of flesh would become a heart of stone. And not only that . . . on one terrible day in the future, their feet would kick their Maker. Their hands would crush Him. Their tongues would call to “crucify Him.” Their eyes would look upon Him with hatred. Their ears would be closed to His offer of mercy. Their hearts would be as hard as stone to His pleadings.

But Jesus did take up humanity in the process of incarnation. He did inhabit a human body similar to the one He made, and then one day His body lay lifeless in a cold stone tomb!

Jesus took eternity’s most costly and decisive decision. The apostle John wrote, “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us” (1 John 3:16), and again, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13).

CREATION’S PROFOUND CONSEQUENCE

That decision to give the breath of life at the dawn of Genesis has profound consequences for us today, for as Jesus took responsibility for creating us, so He took responsibility for re-creating us, to make salvation available to all who accept Him as their Savior.

Salvation is the overarching theme of God’s Word. It not only reveals God’s actions on our behalf, but those actions also profoundly express His character for the fallen and unfallen universe to understand. Concerning the plan of salvation, the apostle Paul wrote, “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory” (1 Corinthians 2:7).

[A]s Jesus took responsibility for creating us, so He took responsibility for re-creating us, to make salvation available to all who accept Him as their Savior.

And what is God saving humanity from? Sin. It affects all human beings. It is the ultimate human problem, and in finality it leads to eternal death. For us to understand the nature of salvation from sin, we must first understand the problem of sin. Writing on salvation, Adventist theologian Ivan Blazen² has provided an insightful way to help us understand sin and its cure.

SIN AS DEED

According to Blazen, the most direct way in which sin manifests itself is through deed or misdeed. God says in Isaiah 64:6 that even our righteous deeds are like filthy rags. In Romans 3:9 to 18, the apostle Paul described the universality of the sin problem before concluding, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (vs. 23).

What is the cure for sin? Peter’s prescription at Pentecost is the only way out of sin: “Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). The apostle Paul said it well: “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). God invites every one of us as sinners to repent, to confess our sins, to be baptized, and receive God’s forgiveness for our sins and cleansing from guilt. Theologians refer to this as the experience of justification, of being declared righteous by God, not because of who we are, but because of who Jesus is and what He did for us on Calvary.

SIN AS DEPRAVITY

Yet, sin is more than a deed or misdeed. Sin may be expressed in words and deeds, but it begins with the sinful inclinations of the fallen heart. Sin is akin to a perversion of a person’s heart, will, and moral nature. We are fatally polluted. We are like a coastline after an oil spill, which cannot cleanse itself. Somebody else must come, clean up the mess, or the polluted coastline

slowly dies. What was said of the pre-Flood human race is applicable to every generation, emphasizing the universal nature of sin and its resulting effects: “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”. (Genesis 6:5).

REMEDY FOR SIN

What, then, is the cure for sin? What we need is more than mere confession and repentance. We need a new heart and right spirit. David recognized this need in his penitential psalm (51:10), and God promised to supply this for us in the new covenant experience (Ezekiel 36:26). This is the experience of heart conversion, regeneration, sanctification, of our will coming ever closer to the will of God. In our prayers, we ought to seek more and more that God’s will be done in our lives as it is in heaven, and we need to seek personal holiness. God Himself expects of those who seek the path of salvation: “Be holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16).

SIN AS DESPOT

Further yet, when we understand sin as deeper than a deed or a depravity, we come to understand sin as a despot, an enslaving power. Romans 5 to 8 describes sinful actions as the natural consequences of fallen sinners living under the despotic power of Satan. Sin as a despot is portrayed as a king or lord that exercises dominion unto death (Romans 5:12–15, 21). We are enslaved to sin (John 8:34; Romans 6:6, 16), which pays sinners the wages of death (6:23).

What, then, is the remedy for sin? We need more than confession and repentance from sin, and even more than a new-heart experience. What is needed is a death to sin and sinful life, and a new and resurrected life in Jesus as both Lord and Savior. When we accept Him as Lord, we are no longer under the lordship of sin (Romans 6). Only under Christ’s lordship can we be liberated from our slavery to sin.

CONCLUSION

We all stand before God as sinners. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Roman 3:23), and we all stand in need of the salvation that comes from Him alone. This salvation experience can happen only if we affirm Jesus as our Savior and enter into a cov-

enant relationship with God. We want forgiveness from sin and reconciliation with God, and these can come only as we seek Jesus, find Him, and believe in Him.

In such searching, finding, and believing God, we ask Him to renew a right spirit within us, to replace our hearts of stone with hearts of flesh that delight to do His will. We enter into a “new covenant” experience like the one God promised through Jeremiah:

“I will put my law in their minds, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. . . . they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will remember no more”

(Jeremiah 31:33, 35). ☪

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I BELONG TO ANOTHER WORLD

CARLOS HUMBERTO CAMPITELLI

Seventh-day Adventists are called to be heaven's ambassadors. This entails more than appearances or even behavior. It is about being. But being must always come before doing. The key is finding and understanding who you are in Christ, and to Whom you belong.

In writing to the church at Corinth, Paul used the expression, “ambassador” to describe the status, the role, and the mission of the Christian believer. The apostle wrote: “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20, NKJV).¹ Being God’s ambassadors is an immense privilege and a great responsibility. It is a call to represent Christ, His life, love, message, mission, and passion for the lost. To be a Christian is to be Christ’s representative in everything.

There are challenges in being in the world but not of the world. Being in the world is temporary, fleeting; belonging to another world is a decision. Consider five questions related to being God’s ambassadors.

1. How do we resist pressure to conform to this world?

The Scriptures counsel us: “[D]o not be conformed to this world” (Romans 12:2). To be conformed to this world would mean to let the ideology, the priorities, and the customs of this world be the controlling and guiding factor of our life and practice, even when such guiding factors lack the discipline and do not conform to the demands of the Scripture. Those who “conform” to this world let their lives be controlled by external pressures, popular ideologies, and standards that society may consider ideal, but are contrary to the will of God.

The same text that warns us not to be conformed to the world also pleads with us to be “transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Those with such a Christ-committed life manifest certain fundamental characteristics, such as those listed below:

- They are joyful even though life may not be easy as a result of not conforming to the standards of this world.
- They are faithful, no matter what the consequences may be. As someone has said, “faith is based on knowing God and His promises, not on rational arguments.”
- They obey God in response to His love because they know He will do what is best for them. Their faith model is not a business model that says, “We will obey God if He rewards us in return.” On the contrary, that is Satan’s *modus operandi*, which he used to tempt Jesus in the desert: “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me” (Matthew 4:9).
- They know that times of great adversity are also times of great opportunity, such as being able to reach out with God’s love to those who do not know what it is.
- They are resilient and persistent, standing up to setbacks and pressing forward to fulfill their mission faithfully.

2. How can we be Christian ambassadors in the midst of pluralism, polarization, and diversity?

Opposing racism, violence in all its forms, or any other act of injustice is part of our Christian duty. However, we cannot naively defend right causes that have been hijacked by groups with different agendas, often anti-Christian ones.

Here we see an old tactic masterfully used by many: divide to conquer. In the past, the dichotomy was between “the rich and the poor,” “men vs. women,” and “whites vs. blacks.” We don’t need to become Marxists—nor should we—to preach social justice because the Bible already talks about it. We don’t need to declare ourselves feminists to preach fair rights for both sexes, male and female. There is no need to advocate for anti-racist movements co-opted by political agendas in order to defend equality between ethnic groups. In some militant social movements, if you do not adhere to the exact solutions they espouse, you are labeled as wrong and an enemy. In fact, you may even be considered a target for virtual or even real lynching.

Even in the light of such a distressing landscape, there is, however, a way out in God’s Word. The biblical creationist teaching is the solution for every human malady because all become equal at the foot of the Cross as we embrace our common ancestry as descending from “Adam, *the son of God*” (Luke 3:38).

What does Jesus expect of us? “Christ is calling for volunteers to enlist under His standard and bear the banner of the cross before the world.”²

3. On what are our choices based? Do we act the same in the virtual world as in the real world?

The truth is, we often don’t. This is because the very same people who reject a lack of authenticity can also become prisoners to a culture of outward appearances. Sometimes, we place greater value on the ethics of personality than on the ethics of character, and *appearances* end up being more important than actually *being*.

Some people become slaves of *doing* while minimizing the *being* part. But *being* must always come before *doing*. An ambassador’s life should be constantly focused on being. The key is finding and understanding who we are in Christ, to whom we belong, and where we are going. As we decide to live in congruence with those ultimate realities, there won’t be any discrepancy between our virtual profile and our real person.

Indeed, there are many who have not settled for living a double life. What they are in real life, they are also in the virtual realm. Living such a life is incredibly liberating and powerful. Our influence will be even more significant if we focus on *being* in Christ and follow what He wants for our lives.

Good disciples generate more disciples than followers; true Christians generate more Christians than followers of themselves. So, it is time to embrace this challenge of being one with Christ, everywhere and at every moment—in real life and in relationships.

4. How should we as ambassadors use our social networks?

Each of us should use our social networks as an ambassador of the King of the universe. Social networks are used to connect and bring about results. It is said that our cell phones are an extension of our arms. The truth is that social networks are an extension of what we have inside.

Jesus told Peter that he would become a fisher of men (Luke 5:10). To fish, we need nets, and to fish social beings, we need social nets. In today’s world, we may well paraphrase Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 10:31 and create a social network to work for God’s glory: “Therefore, whether you Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

5. How are principles rather than mere preferences reflected in our identity and being?

People discuss and debate many things, both in social networks and in personal conversations. Some excel in being opinionated and are ready to argue and fight for any idea, be it Bible-based or not. Too often, street talk overpowers counsel from God's Word. What has more weight when we make decisions—preference or principle?

Often, preference is based on what we like, what we wish for, or what we believe to be the best, according to our personal criteria. In other words, it is based on self, and what self prefers, as was said in the Book of Judges: "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25, NASB). Samson is a good example. He let himself be controlled by the lust of the flesh rather than by the demands of God's law. The most serious issue with Samson was that he did not live to please the Lord but himself. Ellen White well described this phenomenon: "To all who seek first to honor Him, God has promised wisdom; but there is no promise to those who are bent upon self-pleasing."³

The Bible cites many examples of people who made decisions based on principle. Consider Joseph's choice to be on God's side rather than take the easy way of pleasure with Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39:7–9). To Joseph, the principle of obedience to God was preferable over the temporary pleasures that dangled before him. "Joseph knew well what would be the consequence of resistance. On the one hand were concealment, favor, and rewards; on the other, disgrace, imprisonment, perhaps death. His whole future life depended upon the decision of the moment. Would principle triumph? Would Joseph still be true to God? . . . Joseph's answer reveals the power of religious principles. He would not betray the confidence of his master on earth, and, whatever the consequences, he would be true to his Master in heaven."⁴

Based on principle, Joseph made his choice: "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis. 39:9).

When principle is based on what God says, on what He commands, and on His will, we can be sure that we are following the right path. But how can we know God's will if we don't spend time with Him? How can we understand truth if we don't spend time getting to know it?

If we take the Bible and try to adapt it to our likings, we are forcing God's will to conform to our personal preferences. It is then that we can lose our biblical identity. As Seventh-day Adventists, we have a message for the "time of the end." It is a message found in Revelation 14:6 to 13, and it must be experienced and proclaimed to a world that is desperate to hear a voice of hope. It is a message that calls upon us to acknowledge God as our Creator, surrender all to His Son Jesus, and give Him glory because He is our Savior.

The big question we should ask ourselves is this, On what are our choices based? A story is told of a driver who was speeding. When he got to a corner, he saw that the traffic light was red. He looked both ways, and since there was no one around, he drove forward. A few seconds later, a police car stopped him and asked him, "Didn't you see that the traffic light was red?" "Yes," the driver answered, "but I didn't see you." This is what happens when we place *preference* above *principle*.

Principle is thus a key element in the construction of character. "Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls" (Proverbs 25:28). When there are no walls, anything can go in and go out. Joseph exercised self-control, but Samson chose pleasure over principle. Joseph ended up a ruler of Egypt, but Samson ended up under a pile of debris (Judges 16:23–31).

In matters of principle, we should be careful about mindlessly following what everyone else is doing. The voices of other people are not the voice of God. The Bible should be our foundation. Principles are non-negotiable. Compromising on biblical principles never pays off. God and His principles never change. Furthermore, God is sovereign (Psalm 103:19). As we base our lives on God's principles, we have assurance that He will never forsake us. We can confidently obey God and let the sovereign One handle the consequences.

WE ARE AMBASSADORS

Paul rightfully says, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). If our citizenship is up there, why is it that we spend more time thinking of the here and now? Our call is to stay connected to the kingdom of God and His righteousness and be an ambassador of Jesus in everything we think and do. We must act by principle and not preference so that Jesus may be reflected in us. ☮

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ELEVEN PROBLEMS, ELEVEN BLESSINGS

ALEX VOOS

Life often confronts us with many “Daniel in Babylon moments,” but when we throw ourselves into God’s hands, He will enable our faith to succeed and be victorious.

I was born in Brazil and was raised in an Adventist family. When I finished high school, I felt the call to study theology and become a pastor. At the same time, I had an interest in the natural sciences. As I was studying theology, it became more and more clear to me how important the intersection of science and religion is for reaching the secular mind and for helping the young people who are often confronted by skeptic ideas in their academic environment.

So, after finishing theology, I decided to switch fields and embrace the natural sciences. Geology appealed to me because this was the area where the idea of deep time was born, and it is the field that raises many questions concerning long periods of time.

Meanwhile, I gained an opportunity to study geology abroad in a university where I would not have to pay any tuition for my education in geology. My only challenge was to cover the living expenses while studying there, and the living costs there were pretty high compared to my home country. After some months spent looking for funds, I had sufficient financial resources to begin my study abroad. I had developed a network of supporters ready to assist me in my educational journey. Some people gave me occasional donations, but about 60 promised to help me monthly with small donations during the entire time I would be studying abroad. With finances taken care of, I began my study abroad.

PURPOSED IN MY HEART

In my childhood, the story of Daniel and his friends in Babylon was one of my favorites. The verse “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself” (Daniel 1:8, KJV) is one of the Bible passages that made a strong impression on my mind. Until the point where I entered the secular university, all my education had been in Adventist institutions. But now that I was beginning my geology course in a secular university,

I started to notice that I would potentially have some “Daniel in Babylon moments,” especially concerning the Sabbath. But I threw myself into God’s hands, trusting that He would enable me to be like Daniel, who “purposed in his heart” and relied on God’s promises.

A few days after enrolling in my courses, I was alarmed to note that 11 of the 50 subjects that made up the geology program involved outdoor activities, which were traditionally scheduled for weekends, from Friday to Sunday. So, if I missed the Sabbath activities, I would be missing 30 to 50 percent of the curricula for these field courses, and there would be no way to obtain exemptions for so many appointments.

Anguish filled my heart. What would happen to me? Would I have to give up the opportunity I had received and return to my country? I could complete the courses that did not have any Sabbath issues, but I would be unable to finish my graduation requirements. A lot of time and money would be wasted—and what would my donors think?

One day I listed on my computer all the 50 subjects that were required in the geology program. I underscored in red the 11 subjects that had Sabbath issues and placed my problem in God’s hands. I prayed, “Lord, we have 11 problems. Please, help me to solve these. Lord, I know that much of what I will learn about the current scientific understanding will challenge your Word, but I lay these 11 problems in Your hands. Whatever your directions, I will remain faithful to Your will. Please help me.”

My journey was only starting, and the road seemed arduous. Every semester, I had subjects with appointments on Sabbaths. Every semester, there was a cloud of uncertainty concerning what would happen with those subjects. I had to talk to professors, look for exceptions, offer to take extra courses or accomplish additional tasks, and try different solutions. Sometimes I had to look for a way out more than once and persist to identify a possible solution. But what a joy it was that at the end of each semester, the Lord had provided a way out, and I was given exemption from Sabbath examinations each time. Space is not sufficient to narrate the different ways through which God worked a miracle to let me finish all my courses without any problem in Sabbath keeping. Each time this miracle occurred, God gave me an experience whereby I could see His intervention and care, some of them almost miraculous.

When Daniel and his friends were being prepared to be introduced to the king’s court, at first we get the impression that by being faithful and not eating the king’s food they were putting themselves in a drawback. I had the same impression every time I tried to find a solution for one of my course appointments falling on Sabbath. I had to take extra courses or accomplish extra tasks. I never complained to God about the extra tasks I had to accomplish, I just thought that

by trying to be faithful I needed to pay an extra price. I forgot that God could turn troubles into blessings.

One class required all students to participate in an international trip to study important geological formations. That year, the trip would go to Italy and extended over two weekends. Besides my having to find a solution for the two Sabbath days during the trip, the expenses involved were not included in my scholarship. The trip would cost about 2,000 Euros, a substantial amount that my budget could not cover. I was in a quandary, and my only source of help was God.

FOR EVERY PROBLEM, GOD HAS AN ANSWER

About that time, I started participating in an online discussion by a group of geology students and professors that had been organized by Ben Clausen, an Adventist scientist from the Geoscience Research Institute in Loma Linda, California, U.S.A. He invited me to assist him and his team in a field trip he was organizing that year for his research in Peru. Since I was joining his working team, he included my trip expenses in the research’s grant. The field trip was planned to last two weeks and included visits to various places of geological relevance in Peru. Once again, I prayed to God for help and intervention and went to talk to my professor to ask if she could recognize my trip to Peru as a substitute for the trip the department was organizing to Italy, and she accepted my proposal. And my Sabbath challenge with the university-organized field trips was solved.

So, God not only helped me to keep His Sabbath, but also helped me to solve a financial problem. But He did much more than that. In addition to solving my Sabbath problem, the travel to Peru started a year-long professional relationship with Dr. Clausen and his team. That relationship opened the doors for my applying and getting accepted for a PhD program at Loma Linda University after I concluded my geology degree. At the beginning, I felt that I was putting myself in an disadvantageous situation by trying to be faithful to God’s commandments, but as with Daniel and his friends, the apparently disadvantageous situation led me to unexpected blessings.

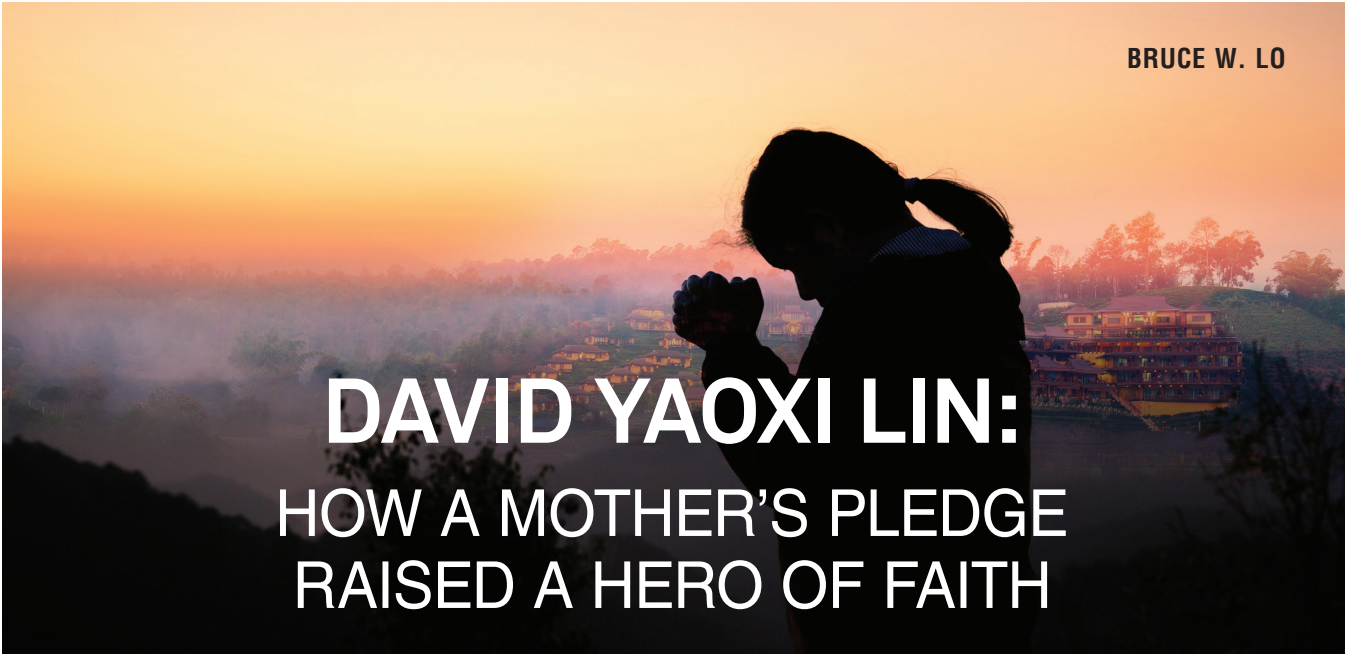
In the summer of 2021, I concluded my degree in geology. Once more, I reviewed the list of courses that I had made as I started my program, this time to see that where I had had a list of subjects underscored in red, now everything was colored in green. Some years before, I had told God I had 11 problems; now I could see that He walked all the way with me and gave me 11 solutions. Praise be to His name! 🙏

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BRUCE W. LO



DAVID YAOXI LIN: HOW A MOTHER'S PLEDGE RAISED A HERO OF FAITH

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Editor's note: *Footprints of Faith* features inspiring stories based on original research about people who responded with courage to Christ's call to "Come and follow me" (Mark 10:21, NIRV).

David Lin was born in 1917 in Manila, Philippines, as the second son of Lin Bao Heng and Pan Cheng Kun.¹ His earliest childhood years were spent in the Philippines, Canada, and Indonesia, where his father served as Chinese consul. As a result, David not only learned Chinese but also English and the Indonesian Malay language.

David's mother had attended a Christian school in Suzhou. An American missionary had taught her to pray, but she neglected this for many years. One day, David ran a high fever and was rushed to a hospital. Worried about her child, David's mother knelt in prayer and promised God that if David would be healed, she would bring him up as a preacher. David recalled later, "Before the doctor had diagnosed my case, I recovered instantly. Since that day Mother drilled into my head that I belonged to God and would become a preacher."²

In 1919, David's father was transferred to Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, as Chinese consul. In 1921, the rest of the family joined him in Canada. The family attended the Baptist church in that city, while the boys, Paul and David, went to school.³

In 1925, with the father's appointment as Chinese consul for Indonesia, the family relocated to Soerabaya, Java, where the boys attended a private school and learned to speak the Indonesian Malay language.⁴

Two years later, Chiang Kai-shek captured the government in Peking (Beijing) to unite China under one rule. Lin

Bao Heng lost his official position, and the family moved to Shanghai, where Paul and David attended a school run by British schoolmasters. Then in 1930, the boys attended an American school there. One day, the teacher asked the students to tell the class what they wanted to be when they grew up. Much to the surprise of all, David declared that he was going to be a preacher.

On Sundays, the boys went with their mother to a Methodist church where they made friends with the three children of Pastor and Mrs. Pyke. In 1932, David's father moved to Hankow (Wuhan) to work in the Bureau of Internal Revenue, while the boys were left with the Pyke family. One day, Lin Bao Heng bought a subscription from a Seventh-day Adventist missionary who came to Hankow. Subsequently, an Adventist Bible worker, Abbie Dunn, visited the Lins and invited Pan Cheng Kun to attend the Adventist church, where she was impressed by the reciting of the Ten Commandments by church members during the worship service. Just prior to that, her lawyer brother-in-law questioned her regarding the principles of the Christian faith. When she told him about the Ten Commandments, he asked her what exactly they were. Pan Cheng Kun was embarrassed that she could not recite all ten of the commandments. So, when she visited the Hankow Adventist church and learned the Ten Commandments and other Adventist essentials, she was sure that she had found the church that she was looking for.⁵

During the summer vacation, David visited his parents in Hankow, and his mother explained to him about the Sabbath

doctrine. Upon his return to Peking, the Pykes learned of his new belief, and tried hard to dissuade him. In the meantime, Abbie Dunn wrote to another Adventist Bible worker in Peking, who came to David's school to invite him to study the Bible with her. This began a period of struggle for David—to keep or not to keep the Sabbath. By 1934, his mother came back to Peking; David joined her in attending the Adventist church.⁶

In 1935, the year David graduated from high school, his older brother Paul was studying in Park College near Kansas City, Missouri, U.S.A. One day tragedy struck, and Paul was killed in a motorcycle accident, leaving David as the only son in the family. His relatives tried to dissuade David from becoming a minister by suggesting that he should choose a more lucrative vocation to bear the family's financial burdens. But David stuck to his decision and to his mother's pledge.⁷

We leave David's story for a while to learn about Clara Ye Chi-sheng. She was born in Fuzhou, Fujian, in 1922 to Christian parents, although they did not formally belong to any church or denomination. During the Sino-Japanese war, the family moved to the northwest town of Lanzhou, where they could be a bit safer, with the city being beyond the Sino-Japanese battle front line.⁸

One day in Lanzhou, Clara found a small pea-like growth on her eye. Since her father was free only on Sundays, and most hospitals were closed on Sundays except the Adventist hospital, they went there. While Clara was waiting for the doctor, she met a nurse who invited her to attend the local Adventist church. She did and found out that Saturday was the true Sabbath. After attending some evangelistic meetings with her mother and brothers in the summer of 1945, Clara decided to get baptized and become an Adventist. It was in the Lanzhou Adventist church that Clara Ye got to know David's mother.⁹

COLLEGE EDUCATION

Meanwhile, after high school, David went to China Training Institute, an Adventist junior college, to study Bible as his major. However, the school closed in August 1937 when the Sino-Japanese war broke out. David then moved to Hong Kong from where, with his parents' help, he proceeded to the United States to continue his ministerial study at Pacific Union College in Angwin, California. During the war years, David's parents moved to the city of Lanzhou, known as the "Free China" zone, which was never occupied by the Japanese military.¹⁰

In the summer of 1938, David went to San Francisco to do colporteur work. For the next four years, he worked in the Pacific Union College cafeteria, the machine shop, the bindery, or in the forest cutting cordwood to earn money for his tuition. After graduat-

ing, David continued his graduate study at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Takoma Park, Maryland, U.S.A. He began working on his Master's thesis, but because he needed to work to support himself, he could not complete the degree until 1946.¹¹

ENTRY TO MINISTRY

In the fall of 1942, David was called to teach Chinese at Pacific Union College. The next year he resigned from this job to spend a year as a colporteur in Honolulu. He set a few new sales records, but the thing that made him most happy was that in Hawaii, he gave Bible studies to a Japanese family and was able to win them to the Sabbath truth.

In 1944, David returned to the U.S. West Coast and was called to prepare Chinese Bible correspondence lessons in conjunction with the church's radio ministry, *The Voice of Prophecy*. David had to print the lessons by hand and have them duplicated by offset because there was no Chinese type available.¹²

Wishing to restart the work after World War II, the China Division invited David in November 1945 to return to China to lead out in radio ministry. Due to the maritime strike and other unexpected events, the trip was delayed till December 1946, when David traveled with a group of Western missionaries to China.¹³

Upon arrival at Shanghai, he worked in the Radio Department of the China Division office. In Shanghai, David was introduced by his mother and a few enthusiastic church members to a comely young lady, Clara Ye Chi-sheng, who had befriended his parents a few years earlier in Lanzhou while both families lived there to escape from the advancing Japanese army. Clara and David fell in love and were married in 1948.

Also in 1948, the civil war in China had reached a point in favor of the Communist army. By December, most of the Western missionaries had withdrawn to Hong Kong, where a provisional China Division church headquarters was set up. The Radio Department moved to Canton, operated for six months, and then moved to Hong Kong in June 1949. David was appointed editor of the Hong Kong edition of *The Signs of the Times*. By December, the provisional office of the China Division turned over all duties to the Chinese staff in Shanghai, and David returned to Shanghai as division secretary.¹⁴

Six months later, the Korean war broke out. American soldiers fought under the United Nations flag and drove into North Korea, while Chinese volunteer troops marched across the border to push them back. Now China and the United States were at war, too. Since the Adventist Church and its mission organization were regarded as American, their assets were frozen in December 1950. In time, the formal church organizational structure in China mainland completely disin-

tegrated. Eventually, by December 1951, the regular division officers were replaced by others.¹⁵

David Lin and other church officers who were discharged from office got together to make slide rules for a living from 1952 to 1954. At the same time, they translated *The Desire of Ages* into Chinese. In time, other volumes of the Conflict of the Ages series were also translated. A group of young people from the Shanghai Adventist church produced mimeographed copies of these books and distributed them.¹⁶

20 YEARS OF IMPRISONMENT

David and Clara had one son and four daughters.¹⁷ Then in April 1958, David was imprisoned for three years as a counter revolutionary. Subsequently, in 1960, he was sentenced to 15 years and was sent to a water-conservation project where he pushed wheelbarrows, operated a power winch, and served successively as X-ray technician, power-station switch operator, and tractor electrician on a state farm. As he recalled in his autobiography, “in all these years I received humane treatment and at times I could so arrange my work as to keep the Sabbath fairly well. My children came to visit me several times and on one [of those visits] . . . I baptized my son Roger in a moat. . . .”¹⁸

“In retrospect, I praise God for His providential care in making all things work out for the good of all concerned. . . . The years of trial have revealed many flaws in my character, stressing my need to overcome them.”¹⁹ After his prison term ended in 1975, David was transferred from the state farm to a coal-mining company for five years to translate technical literature. There he earned a regular wage and was able to enjoy Sabbath privileges.²⁰ During all those years, his mother, his wife Clara, and their children also persevered in their witness to the Sabbath despite hardship.

LATER YEARS

In 1978, David returned to Shanghai to join his family. As children of counter-revolutionary parents, his children were denied higher education. With the assistance of former friends in China who were now in the United States, their son Roger was sponsored to continue his education at Pacific Union College. A few years later, a friend set up a scholarship fund for David and Clara’s four daughters, who also went to United States for further education.²¹

In 1989, David became the pastor of one of the largest Adventist churches in China at that time, fulfilling his mother’s pledge to God that she would bring him up to be a preacher. On March 28, 1991, David was fully exonerated by the Chinese government, and the record of his imprisonment was officially erased.²²

When David was 80, he fell from his bike and broke

his left hip. This signaled that the time had come to retire from pastoral ministry. After surgery, he joined his children in the United States. However even in retirement, David remained active with translation work and in providing educational facilities for his home country of China.²³

David passed away after a brief illness on February 10, 2011, at the age of 94. Seven years later, on March 7, 2018, his wife, Clara, passed to her rest. The two lived and died claiming the promise, “Be faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10, CEB). ☪

Adapted from a longer article in the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists* (ESDA), and can be accessed at <http://encyclopedia.adventist.org>. To contribute to the ESDA, please contact encyclopedia@gc.adventist.org.

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MISSIONARIES IN THEIR OWN BACKYARD

MARTÍN BERNHARDT

A group of Adventist students in Rosario, Argentina, supported the social and spiritual development of children through a soccer club.

“We would like the university students at your church to support our soccer club.” So wrote Marcelo Santos, the president of the Botafogo Soccer Club in Rosario, Argentina, to Nélica Ortega, director of the Anael Assisted Lunch Program that offered food and Bible studies to many children every Sabbath. One day, Nélica told Marcelo that she had observed two things among children playing soccer in the U-6 to U-15 categories that concerned her:

First, many children seemed to display bad behavior during matches and sustained frequent injuries; and second, many children, although eager to play, seemed to be malnourished, either due to lack of food or poor eating habits. Marcelo knew that Nélica was a Seventh-day Adventist, and that Adventists are quite health-conscious and their church is committed to promoting healthy habits.

One day, Marcelo called Nélica to ask if some of her Adventist students, could help his Botafogo soccer club. As members of the Rosario-Argentina Adventist Students Center (CUAR), we could not ignore the request. A community soccer club was asking Adventist university students to support their young members! We soon decided to make the most of the opportunity.

We arranged an information session with the club leaders to learn about their needs and concerns. Over the next two weeks, a proposal was prepared with a schedule of potential activities involving professionals and students from our student center. The idea emerged to meet twice a week to offer talks to the children and

their parents. Botafogo Club leaders supported our proposal and adapted practice times to fit our activities into the children's schedule.

We launched our project in 2019, hoping for parents to start attending together with their children. Little by little, more and more parents came and stayed for our meetings. Before long, 80 people, including parents, attended the meetings.

Throughout 2019, we offered seminars to teach parents about healthy life habits and foods, sharing vegetarian recipes and offering food-sampling sessions. An Adventist psychologist, Simone Walginsk, supported our project by discussing topics such as sexuality, strengthening friendships, and encouraging good sportsmanship. Parents learned how to enhance family relationships and were given advice on how to support their children's education. Matías Siri, one of the local Adventist pastors, closed every session with a brief devotional message and prayer.



It was very rewarding to see that families would come seeking more information about healthful habits. Some of them contacted the pastor asking him to visit their homes for Bible studies. At the time of this writing, five families are taking such studies with Pastor Siri.

At the end of 2019, the Botafogo Club leaders asked us to repeat the experience in 2020 with a new group of children. They recognized how beneficial the project had been to the members of their club. And we recognized what an opportunity the project provided for many people to get to know God through our health message and how that message led people to seek and study God's Word. COVID interfered with our plans but the project will be reinstated when the pandemic is controlled.

And as Adventist university students attending a public school, we were greatly blessed through our involvement. God has indeed used a small group of Adventist students to penetrate their larger student community with the love of God and His caring message for all.

Often, we are not aware of the way God can transform our tiny grain of sand into a massive beach of blessings. It was thrilling to witness how something so simple was able to touch so many hearts. We thank God for this wonderful opportunity of sharing His health principles. We want to encourage Adventist university students from around the world to share their expertise and energy by being willing to serve their society and their church, and by being missionaries in their own backyards, close to where they live and study. 🙏

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ENOCH KANAGARAJ

A dialogue with an Indo-U.K. Adventist who spearheads “One Vision”: a youth organization working for community cohesion and service in Hertfordshire County, United Kingdom



INTERVIEW BY AUDREY ANDERSSON

Born in Trichy, India, Enoch Kanagaraj is the youngest of four siblings. By the time he was born, his police officer father and politician mother had both given up their jobs to become full-time evangelists. Having completed his primary and secondary education in Seventh-day Adventist schools, Kanagaraj enrolled in a bachelor's program in commerce. On completion of his first year of college, he changed direction and moved to the United Kingdom. Here he completed a BA in psychology at Thames Valley University. While studying, Kanagaraj worked part time in retail business. On graduating, he opted for a career in retail management. Initially, he worked with a High Street retailer, specializing in the sale of high-end electrical goods. After 20 years, progressing to senior management roles, he moved from consumables into food retailing, regarding this as more sustainable and less susceptible to the vagaries of the economy. After all, people always need to eat! Eight years ago, Kanagaraj joined The Co-operative Group (better known as the Co-op), because he liked its ethical commitment to its suppliers, customers, and the community. The largest food retailer in the U.K., the Co-op is a member-owned company and is known as a community retailer.

Kanagaraj's career path over time created some discussion in his family. He jokingly refers to himself as the “prodigal son,” as all his siblings work for the church. One brother is a pastor, another is a treasurer, and his sister is a teacher in India. When he chose to work outside the church, his father challenged him to always be faithful and find ways to serve the Lord.

Kanagaraj's first job with the Co-op was operations manager and community-engagement advisor. After moving on to the company's food operation, his role was to oversee convenience stores in Hertfordshire County, U.K.

It has taken some time, but Kanagaraj believes that he has now found where the Lord wants him to be. Alongside his full-time job, he spearheads a charity called “One Vision,” working on community cohesion, bringing young people together through a youth council, supporting mental health and wellbeing, and providing support to the vulnerable in the community.

Enoch Kanagaraj is married to Nishtha, and they have two children, Jasmine and Jadon. While Enoch serves the local church as Sabbath school leader, community-liaison officer and lay preacher, Nishtha assists in the church treasury.

■ *Although you grew up in an Adventist home, and attended Adventist schools, can you pinpoint a time when you made a personal commitment to God?*

I have always identified myself as a Seventh-day Adventist. It is in my DNA, but my deep personal relationship with Christ started about six years ago. Fifteen years ago, I needed some new windows in my home. A Jewish friend recommended a carpenter, Richard Poulton. When he came to my house, his face seemed very familiar, but I couldn't place where I had met him. While he worked on the windows, he explained that he couldn't work on Saturday, as he would be at church. From that contact, I began to attend the Adventist Church occasionally.

A few years later, I went to Richard's church with my wife. A man, sitting front of us, Michael Dragoyevich, turned around and started talking to us. Unknown to me, Richard and Michael were both involved with an initiative called Door to Door witnessing. They invited me to join them knocking on doors to listen to people's needs and find ways to help them. The Holy Spirit started moving within me. I felt a closeness to Jesus and accepted Him as my personal Savior. From then on, faith in Jesus became a passion with me, and gradually developed into a commitment to sharing Jesus with others. I joined the local Community Chaplaincy Service (CCS), whose aim is to raise the church's profile in the local community by identifying and meeting the felt needs of community members. The idea came from my workplace, where I had been appointed as a community engagement advisor. My job role is to engage with community members, leaders, small groups, and charities. The main aim was to make the Co-op popular, bring back the lost members, and recruit new members. This struck a chord, as I realized this is what we should be doing in the church. "One Vision" was formed.

■ *What is "One Vision"?*

Although the Stanborough Park Seventh-day Adventist Church has more than 600 members, when Community Chaplaincy Services developed, we recognized that the community needs were much greater than we could meet by ourselves. We began to connect and meet with other community organizations and charities, as well as local and national government leaders, to explore how we could cooperate. Everything was based at the Stanborough Park church. Suddenly, people who normally would never come to church became regular visitors. Out of these meetings "One Vision" emerged with the following stated aims and objectives:

- To provide Watford (our local town) residents with an effective voice on issues that concern everyone: equality, housing, faith, employment, and opportunity.
- To strive to help all who needed a safe home, adequate food, and access to health care.
- To provide a forum for members to network, exchange ideas, share information and skills, support one another, and to provide a voice for the disadvantaged.
- To provide leadership for the volunteer community, including training and development.

Ambitious as these goals were, we believe that God expected us to dream big and aim high.

■ *As "One Vision" was starting, the COVID pandemic hit the United Kingdom. How did it impact the "One Vision" project?*

As the pandemic pushed the entire country into a lockdown, we immediately confronted stories of hardship. People could not get out to shop for their urgent needs. School children who normally would be entitled to free meals at school suddenly were going hungry. Fortunately, our Stanborough Park church has a full-size commercial kitchen, and we began to prepare and deliver meals. Yet it was clear we could not meet all the needs by ourselves. We joined other faith groups, local community and government representatives, and together we prepared and distributed 3,200 hot meals and 800 food parcels every week.

■ *Is "One Vision" only about feeding people?*

Not at all. Providing meals and feeding people were a real need during the pandemic, but we have identified many other needs. COVID-19 is the visible pandemic, but there is a hidden pandemic, which is just as lethal—mental-health issues, bereavement, and hunger. Each week, we took between five and 10 calls from people who had suffered bereavement, with a significant number of these tragedies being suicides, involving family and friends needing counseling.

Loneliness and mental-health issues are particularly prevalent among young people, which led us to set up a youth council and make a conscious effort to involve youth in leadership roles. We are now partnering with local government to produce a weekly mental-health webinar and support the development of a mental-health platform. We have received cooperation and input from the General Conference, division, and union Health Ministries departments.

■ *You mention other groups—local, regional, and national government officials. How does this cooperation work in practice?*

We have focused on common needs, and what we can do together. Our motto is “Bringing People Together.” Everyone has something to offer, and we work to find a place for everyone who wants to volunteer. We have gone to the local authorities and our member of Parliament. Instead of asking them for help, we have asked how we can help them. This has opened doors. “One Vision” has been mentioned in the Parliament as an example of community cooperation. We have received several prestigious awards and been invited to the House of Lords as part of an inter-faith dialogue, which has grown out of our work in the community and cooperation with other faith groups.

■ *You work full time, have a young family, and “One Vision” seems also to be almost a full-time job. How do you manage?*

It is all a question of priorities. The Lord comes first, then my family, and then everything else falls into place. Spending time in prayer and committing everything I do to God is key. Because I love the Lord, I want to show His love and compassion to others, to have a spirit of generosity in everything I do. Like Joshua, I have chosen to say, “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15, NKJV).* “One Vision” is something the whole family is involved with. We see the needs, and as we mix with people we are just inspired and driven to keep going. I have found that as I commit my time and energy in service for others, the Lord blesses all areas of my life.

I have also been fortunate to find good mentors, who help me keep things focused and in balance. In turn, I try to consciously mentor others, both at work and in “One Vision.” One person cannot do everything, and a key part of leadership is developing and empowering others. That way, both at work and in “One Vision” we can achieve more.

■ *As you carry out your tasks in “One Vision,” do you find many opportunities to share your faith?*

In all my dealings with people I try to model Christ’s compassion. Working in the retail trade, there are always issues like shoplifting. Rather than prosecuting, we have opted for working with the police and company

to find long-term solutions. We started a youth employment scheme and ways to support young people.

I don’t work on Sabbath, and that always opens opportunities to witness about my faith. Of course, “One Vision” and the fact that it is grounded in the church, gives many opportunities to share what we believe.

■ *From your experience, what attributes are key to your success in both business and in “One Vision”?*

The most important principle is to see people and focus on them as individuals in need and in search. Many people live a task-oriented life. Their priority is to get the job done, no matter what the cost. When you see people, put them first, and ask how you can cooperate together, keeping in view that there is no limit to what you can achieve with God on your side.

■ *What advice would you give to someone wanting to start something like “One Vision” or getting involved in their community in other ways?*

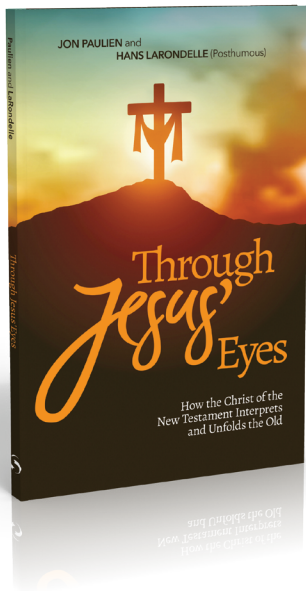
First, find out how much time is realistically available to you. With that decided, begin knocking on doors on Sabbath afternoons. Pray! Pray! Pray! Commit yourself and your desire to the Lord. Find a project to get involved in, and then be open to the Lord’s leading. I never dreamed that I would be spearheading something like “One Vision,” but the Lord does amazing things when we are open to His leading. ☮

*All Bible references in this article are quoted from the *New King James Version* of the Bible

You can find out more about “One Vision” at <https://www.onevisionproject.org/>. Enoch Kanagaraj can be contacted at enochkanagaraj@yahoo.co.uk.

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THROUGH JESUS' EYES: HOW THE CHRIST OF THE NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETS AND UNFOLDS THE OLD

Jon Paulien and Hans LaRondelle (Madrid, Spain: Safeliz, 2020), paperback, 158 pages.

Reviewed by **Robert Osei-Bonsu**

Through *Jesus' Eyes* is the capstone of a lifetime of study and ministry by the late Hans Karl LaRondelle (1929-2011), a distinguished Dutch Adventist minister and theologian who taught systematic theology at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University (Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A) for 26 years (1967-1993). The subtitle of the book, *How the Christ of the New Testament Interprets and Unfolds the Old*, zeroes in on the lifelong commitment of LaRondelle to teach and preach Jesus as the author, center, and focus of the entire Bible. After LaRondelle's death, his colleague, Jon Paulien, himself a former seminary stalwart and author, helped complete the book, which makes a distinguished contribution to the study of the Old and the New Testaments, and how they relate to and complement each other.

The book is divided into two parts. Chapters 1 to 6 deal with biblical interpretation. Chapters 7 to 13 explore the contextual interpretation of the Bible. The book presents the story of redemption from Genesis to Revelation, explor-

ing the harmony between Christ's messianic declarations and His interpretation of the Old Testament (OT) in the New (NT) (p. 9).

Chapter 1 begins with the affirmation that "the Bible is an inspired book that contains the Word of God" (p. 15). The role of the Holy Spirit in the inspiration, interpretation, and enlightenment of the Bible is carefully emphasized. The authors trace the various theories advanced in history to uphold biblical inspiration and call for better principles of biblical interpretations to understand the Scripture in all its fullness.

Chapter 2 deals with "The Need for Principles of Biblical Interpretation." That need is found in the passage of time, etymology, and cultural dynamics that justify updating the interpretation of Scripture for every new generation.

"Christ-Centered Hermeneutics" (Chapter 3) explores biblical interpretation from Jesus' perspective. Jesus' self-understanding that He was the long-awaited Messiah underscores His biblical interpretations (cf. Matthew 11:28, 29; Luke 24:45). For the Christian, Christ is the faithful Interpreter of Scripture, and His presentation of the OT is the standard of interpretation. To appreciate Christ's method of interpretation calls for delineating the allegorical interpretations of Scripture (Chapter 4). Most apostles and church fathers engaged in apologetics and used allegorical methods to make Scripture relevant to their time.

In Chapter 5 ("Christian Typology"), the authors present a biblical approach to appreciating the profound things of God: faithfulness to the text and the historical context, and meticulous exegesis. The chapter also deals with the difference between *allegorism* and *typology*: The former deals only with the words of the text, while the latter "brings to light repeating *patterns of events* in redemptive history" (p. 59). The authors argue that God both spoke and acted in human history, and the consistency of His actions and words lays the foundation for biblical typology.

Chapter 6 examines "The Contribution of the Reformers in Understanding the Bible." The approach of the Reformers resulted in the rediscovery of the gospel and affirmed the authenticity of the Scriptures. As a result, we have theological and faith expressions such as *sola scriptura*, *solo Christo*, and *sola fide* that emphasize the value of Scripture in salvation history. The legacy of the Reformers was their unity in Christocentric interpretation of Scripture.

Chapter 7 summarizes the first six chapters and serves as a bridge between the book's two sections. After a short review of the two standard methods of interpreting the Bible from antiquity—*allegorism* and *literalism*—Paulien asserts that LaRondelle was a champion of a Christ-centered hermeneutic that employed typology to unearth the truth of Scripture, the way Jesus did. Chapters 7 to 12 demonstrate such a typology in action.

Chapter 8 deals with “The Biblical Perspective of Redemptive History” starting with the fall of Adam and Eve. The Bible writers captured the unfolding of redemption history from the time of the patriarchs and showed how this was fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus. “How Jesus Applied Apocalyptic Prophecies to His First Advent” is the title of Chapter 9. He not only had an intellectual understanding of such an application but also knew the divine import of such prophecies. For instance, by applying the title “Son of Man” to Himself (Mark 2:5–10; cf. Psalm 110:1; Daniel 7:13, 14), Jesus demonstrated His understanding that He was the One to whom the prophecy referred.

Chapter 10 discusses “The Sign of the Second Advent of Christ.” The authors refer to Matthew 24 as it highlights the tension between the present and future ministry of Christ in response to questions about the signs of His return, the end of the age, and the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus’ answer is seen as a typological presentation of the destruction of Jerusalem and the entire world (cf. Matthew 24:15, 16; Daniel 9:26, 27).

Chapter 11, “Understanding the Apocalypse,” examines the OT as a backdrop for understanding the Book of Revelation. An interpretation devoid of such understanding may lead to the extremes of literalism and allegorism (Revelation 15:3). The authors thus point out that a knowledge of other books of the Bible is imperative to understanding Revelation.

Chapter 12 explores “The Good News of Armageddon.” The authors point out that *Armageddon* is a word that appears uniquely (Revelation 16:16) and refers to a place where the kings of the earth gather against the Lamb. The book points out that a blend of the covenant images of the OT and the Messianic perspective of the NT is necessary to unlock the meaning of *Armageddon*. Thus, just as God delivered ancient Israel from the grip of Egypt, the Messiah’s people will be delivered from worldwide oppression in the last days.

Jon Paulien concludes the book with Chapter 13, “Israel, Jesus, and the Church,” intimating that the mission of Israel was to occupy a unique place in redemptive history, to be a kingdom of priests and a link between God and the nations of the world (Exodus 19:5, 6; cf. Genesis 12:3). When Israel failed in its mission, the responsibility fell on the Messiah to bring the Gentiles and Israel back to God (Isaiah 9:5; Luke 2:32). The Israel of God is no longer defined by geographical and ethnic affiliations but by a connection with the Messiah. The Christian Church is the new Israel.

CRITIQUE

A typological reading is widely diffused in the Bible. The attempt of the authors to redefine it as a distinguished hermeneutical tool, faithful to the historical context of the Bible, gives it a new approach. Doing so rules out the

arbitrary reading of the Bible found in allegorical interpretation, which permits each individual to apply extraneous interpretations to the Bible, which can rob Scripture of its Messianic perspective. The adoption of the typological method expounded in this book, however, gives impetus to the Hebrew background of Scripture.

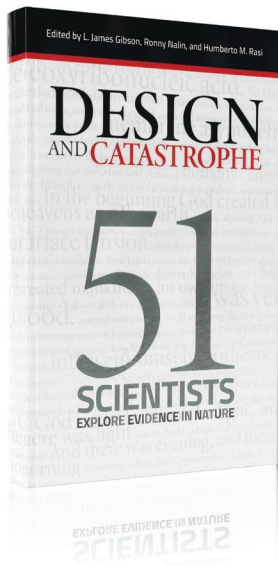
The typological reading of the Bible as a hermeneutical tool advanced by the authors reimposes the authority to interpret Scripture with Scripture and by the Holy Spirit. Such a method exposes the arbitrary position of the Catholic Magisterium that it is the sole authority to communicate the intentions of the writers of Scripture. The hermeneutical principle of Scripture to interpret Scripture curtails the tendency to use biblical interpretations to support certain church traditions. The clarity in interpreting and understanding the apocalypse is heightened through biblical typology. Thus, the more profound things of God that allegorism seeks to unravel through arbitrary means are easily understood using two principles: The Hebrew background and Messiah-centered perspective. The examples found in the book are consistent and coherent with the typological method of reading the Bible. Most importantly, the book links Messianic concepts like “the Son of Man” and “the stone” found in Daniel as fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

In Chapter 11, the authors describe Revelation 12 to 14 as containing the book’s climax and key section. However, this section should be seen as the climax of the Great Controversy between good and evil in human history. Revelation 20 to 22 should form the book’s climax, since all the tensions in the Book of Revelation between good and evil gravitate toward God’s restoration of paradise. The purpose of Chapter 12 was not an exegetical exposé of the word *Armageddon* but the deliverance of God’s people; however, an exegetical consideration of the passage would have shed light on the typological-hermeneutical construct proposed by the authors.

The book could have ended on a comparative high point by synthesizing all the chapters. Perhaps a future edition may include an epilogue of the entire book. However, the book is highly recommended for lay readers and scholars because it brings together biblical, historical, and theological perspectives of biblical interpretation. ☪

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DESIGN AND CATASTROPHE (51 SCIENTISTS EXPLORE EVIDENCE IN NATURE)

L. James Gibson, Ronny Nalin, and Humberto M. Rasi, Editors (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2021), paperback, 240 pages.

Reviewed by Suzanne Phillips

D*esign and Catastrophe* is a personal testimony of 51 scientists on their convictions about the biblical account of a recent six-day creation and a global catastrophic flood. The authors draw from their own scientific specialties how they have established their belief in the biblical account of Creation and the Flood.

The book is divided into nine sections. The first two sections deal with the cosmos, non-living matter, atoms, and DNA and argue that the universe and basic building blocks of this world testify to the Creator. The topics then progress like a college textbook: starting with small things like molecular pathways (for example, photosynthesis), then moving to cells, on to animal and human biology, then to interacting systems. To honor the subject matter and the goal of the book, the editors simultaneously ordered the topics to mirror the creation story: first, the creation of heavenly bodies, then waters and air, the creation of animals, and finally the formation of humans. These sections deal with diverse topics that vary from squid longevity, cricket songs, flight of swiftlets, skulls of

dogs, humans’ senses of hearing and vision, to appreciation of beauty, maternal bonding, and altruism. The last two sections deal with evidence of sin’s impact on the Earth and life on it. Among other topics, these sections include an engaging discussion of epigenetics and the reality of widespread sedimentary and volcanic rock layers across continents. The section on geology is the largest, with nine testimonies given.

The list of authors for this book is very impressive—47 with PhDs, one with a doctorate of science, two medical doctors, and one with a doctorate in veterinary medicine. A short biography of each author is given at the end of the book, putting a very personal face on their testimonies. On average, each author contributed about four pages. Some testimonies are packed with dense scientific content that will delight the knowledgeable reader; other authors present their evidence with easy-to-understand scientific data connected in new ways. However, in all cases, the authors’ intent is to show how nature testifies to the power of God and His actions on this Earth, either in Creation or through the global flood. In each testimony, there is a combination of depth and clarity that will engage any reader who has some college-level education and is interested in issues relating to faith and science.

The book is edited by L. James Gibson (PhD in biology from Loma Linda University, retired director of Geoscience Research Institute [GRI]), Ronny Nalin (PhD in earth science from University of Padova, Italy, director of GRI) and Humberto M. Rasi (retired director of education, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, PhD in Hispanic literature and Latin American history from Stanford University).

The book does not claim either to comprehensively cover any specific topic, or to present an exhaustive collection of scientific data supportive of the Bible. Instead, the topics appear to have been chosen by the authors themselves, drawing from their own areas of expertise. The power of the book lies in the realization that this is a personal testimony of people who have studied as deeply as human science allows at this point in history, and how, after deeply delving into the depths of human comprehension, they continue to see the hand of God working in nature—and how nature, and indeed the rocks themselves, cry out that the Word of God is true: “For in six days, the Lord made heaven and earth, and all that in them is” (Exodus 20:11, KJV). ☞

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