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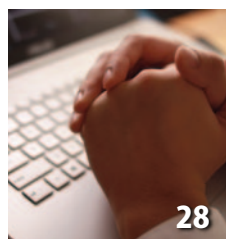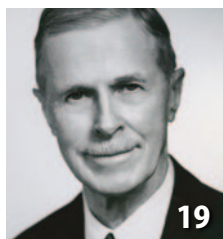
Does Teaching About Evolution in Adventist Schools Destroy Faith in God?

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Remember the

WONDERS

He Has Done

Chandra Goff

I n May 2021, my son, Kaleb, reached one of the big milestones: He graduated from the 8th grade and left his elementary school years behind. The ceremony was simple; the students had wanted it that way. But even so, there was much to reflect on and appreciate.

There was a commemorative presentation displaying pictures of all the graduates from babyhood to their current age, accompanied by recorded speeches of thankfulness from the graduates to those who had stood beside them all the years they were attending Mt. Aetna Adventist School in Hagerstown, Maryland. Students prerecorded their thanks so that they would not have to read it while they were nervous, and instead, could deliver roses to those they were thanking as their words of appreciation were played.

Their principal gave the commencement address. His speech was filled with reflections on the class and their uniqueness. He was not only their principal, but also their homeroom teacher and class sponsor, so he had plenty of amusing anecdotes to share. It was obvious in the way he spoke about the class, and each student in the class, that he cared about them personally.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the celebratory reception was held outside. It was happy and loud, with the popular car parade of graduates (driving through the school parking lot blowing horns while people gathered on the school lawn cheered) making a comeback from the year before. Even my reticent son, who doesn't like to be in large gatherings and had been asking if he had to go, seemed to enjoy himself. (And the next day, when he could have stayed home because he wasn't required to attend the last day of school—since

he was now a graduate!—he decided to go so that he could see some of his friends one more time before they all went their separate ways.) It was a pleasant occasion filled with excitement and anticipation.

Eighth-grade graduation is full of hope. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."[1] Like most graduations, the occasion was full of the students' hopes about where they will be going next in their educational journeys. It was full of the parents' hopes that the lessons their children have learned will assist them and lead to success. It was full of the teachers' hopes that what they imparted to their students made a difference, even if the results might not be immediately known. Whatever the size of the school or the number of students, everyone has hopes and dreams.

As Adventist educators, every year we watch our students prepare to move on to new experiences and—whether we have known the students for only a short time or have been involved in their education from the very beginning—we have grand hopes for each one. And yet, our hopes pale in comparison to God's plans for them and for us. For each of us, God envisions "infinite possibilities."[2]

I graduated from the 8th grade from Mt. Aetna, as well—36 years ago. I've experienced two other graduations of my own (and several of other family). I still believe what Jeremiah 29:11 says. God has plans to give me a future and a hope, but I've reached an age that I can't help but think I've already reached that future. Watching my son's 8th-grade graduation, along with
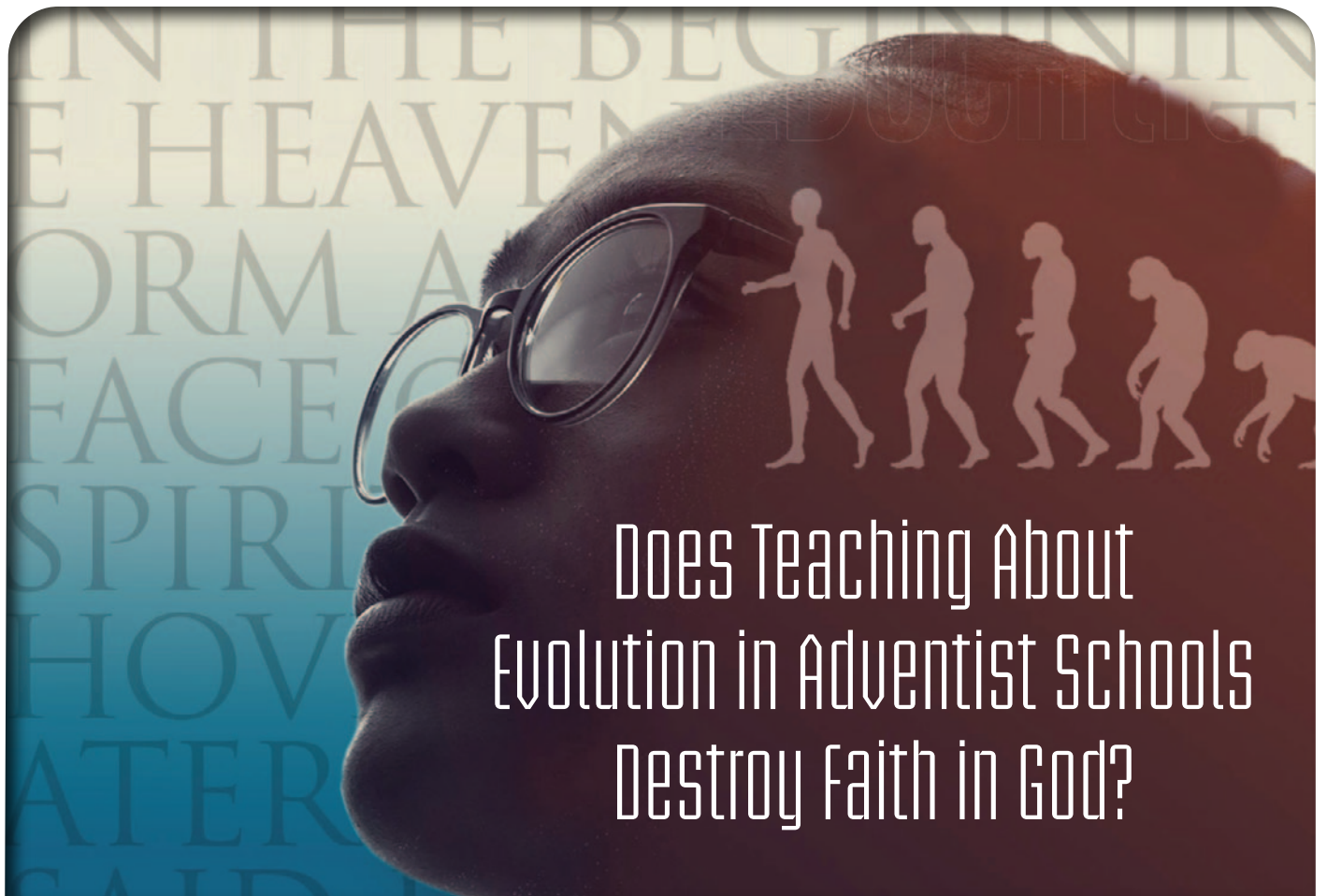
Does Teaching About Evolution in Adventist Schools Destroy Faith in God?

How many of us as Adventist teachers have heard parents say, "My kid went away to college and became an atheist"? For example, Bryan Ness recounts an anecdote regarding college students who, upon returning to their home churches, confront the minister. These students learned of the "certainties" of evolution, which put them into a "spiritual crisis."[1] Or, as Leonard Brand shares regarding a conversation he had with a colleague who "explained he once was once a Christian . . . but when he studied evolution in college, he realized that Christianity was not true."[2]

We suggest these anecdotes are not isolated events, and this "confrontation" between evolution and creation is not going to occur just because a religious individual went to a secular university. The "certainties" of evolution are constantly bombarding humanity through media, pop culture, and secular literature; even the courts[3] get involved. How then can Seventh-day Adventist educators intellectually prepare their students to be factually literate about the Seventh-day Adventist worldview, yet knowledgeable about and tolerant of opposing theories? We suggest that a purely apologetics-based educational strategy that defends only one particular worldview or merely introduces differing views may inadvertently bias individual learning, laying the foundation

for a future intellectual crisis. This could undermine confidence in a Seventh-day Adventist-based understanding of the nature of reality.

Ian Barbour defined four science-and-religion interaction typologies: conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration.[4] Of the four, "dialogue," where both science and religion can communicate and contribute to each other, has a long history in Seventh-day Adventism (e.g., George McCready Price, 1870-1963; and Frank Marsh, 1899-1992). Both of these Magisteria (Science and Religion)[5] contribute to a more complete understanding of our lives, our purpose, and our universe while enabling pursuit of intellectual

BY STANLEY D. DOBIAS and RUSS BUTLER

and meaningful investigations via their own methods.[6] The view that science and religion are separate and antagonistic entities is not supported[7] when one holds a mature understanding of God and His providence.

A far more complete view of reality is gained by embracing the discoveries of science and revelations of God, as we have learned through the Seventh-day Adventist Christian approach (see Box 1 on page 10). As Scripture succinctly commands: "Test all things, hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21, NKJV).[8] However, public discourse regarding the place of religion and science often portrays them in "conflict," or worse, stridently at "war."[9]

Student presuppositions and misconceptions about the relationship between science and religion are of importance to Seventh-day Adventist educators, as are educators' biases when they, in turn, educate students. Indeed, we all view reality with biased lenses. However, increased breadth of learning expands our overall understanding of God and helps instill in us a commitment to self-reflection. In Ellen White's words: "Those who are uneducated, untrained, and unrefined are not prepared to enter a field in which the powerful influences of talent and education combat the truths of God's Word. Neither can they successfully meet the strange forms of error, religious and philosophical combined, to expose, which requires a knowledge of scientific as well as Scriptural truth."[10]

Jeremy Uecker and Kyle Longest suggest that when college students, as emerging adults, adopt the view that religion and science are at odds, they are less likely to be religious later in life.[11] However, the historical record of Seventh-day Adventist educators and researchers includes those whose successes were the product of both their religious and scientific worldviews. The authors of this article regard the "at war" view as largely hyperbole and so, guided by our Adventist beliefs, we believe educators in Adventist schools ought to provide students a broader understanding of how science and religion can interact. College students, as emerging adults, will have the opportunity to shape the contours of the public, science-religion discourse. We suggest a more productive and proper science-religion discourse in which they can work together.[12]

Uecker and Longest found that religious young adults who rejected science and evolutionary thought reported higher religious affiliations than individuals who accepted natural forces for Earth's creation. Or, more bluntly, college students who rejected science appeared to be more "religious" than their cohorts who actively engaged in seeking to understand science.[13] However, common knowledge and experience reveal that religiosity and piety may be appearance rather than substance. As Seventh-day Adventist educators, one of our objectives is to support and enhance our students' spiritual journeys. However, our experience indicates that too often, fear of "losing a soul" leads many Christian educators to cite studies like Uecker and Longest as the basis for suppressing any discussion of contemporary scientific explanations for the origins of life, human existence, and the cosmos because they fear such discussions will be detrimental to and impede understanding and development of a strong faith. Examples of purely doctrinal religious education, as evidenced by some zealot Arabic schools' teachings, indicated that even though graduates exhibited faithful adherence to their native faiths, they expressed intolerance toward secular and scientific ideas, and also toward the tenets of non-native religions as well—an indication that intolerance of any set of ideas may lead to intolerance of all. In other words, indoctrination that pits one specific ideology against another may have a "spillover" effect that results in intolerance being expressed toward all differing ideas.

The university is an institution of scholarship and education, a place to exchange ideas. Ideally, it provides an atmosphere where students learn how to converse about diverse ideas and engage with and gain understanding from other fertile minds. In *The Idea of a University,* Newman stated that education is "the power of viewing many things at once as one whole, of referring them severally to their true place in the universal system, of understanding their respective values, and determining their mutual dependence."[14] Thus, indoctrination that focuses on one ideology to the exclusion of others contradicts the call to Christian universities to present "all branches of knowledge"[15] or as the Scriptures declare, "test all things . . . hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Thus, we suggest that science and religion are not only compatible, both being God's creation, but also are both necessary to develop a deep and abiding faith. For example, as Francis Collins, a Christian and former head of the Human Genome Project, now the director of the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, U.S.A., suggests, "The God

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of the Bible is also the God of the genome. He can be worshipped in the cathedral or in the laboratory."[16] Our Seventh-day Adventist heritage, doctrines, and ideals lead us to believe that God is the Ruler of all, the Creator.[17] Foundationally, our worldview and educational philosophy rest on God as Creator, the Bible, and nature. Therefore, we find it "un-university"-like when secular institutions reduce opportunities for student religious interaction and learning; we wish not to commit a similar fallacy by overly subjugating science-based evidence. In the words of Ellen White: "Since the book of nature and the book of revelation bear the impress of the same master mind, they cannot but speak in harmony. By different methods, and in different languages, they witness the same great truths."[18]

At AdventHealth University (AHU) in Orlando, Florida, U.S.A., we (the authors of this article) teach a course using a dialogue approach, where we address characteristics of science and religion, their similarities and differences, and their strengths and weaknesses. Even though we had seen a great quantity of anecdotal information suggesting that teaching evolution can decrease faith in God, we sought to assess whether this could occur, at least for our students. We devised a pre- and post-test analysis that asked students to rank their confidence regarding their belief in God and how well they could respond to the problem of pain and suffering. In the remainder of this article, we present and discuss the findings of our three-year study.
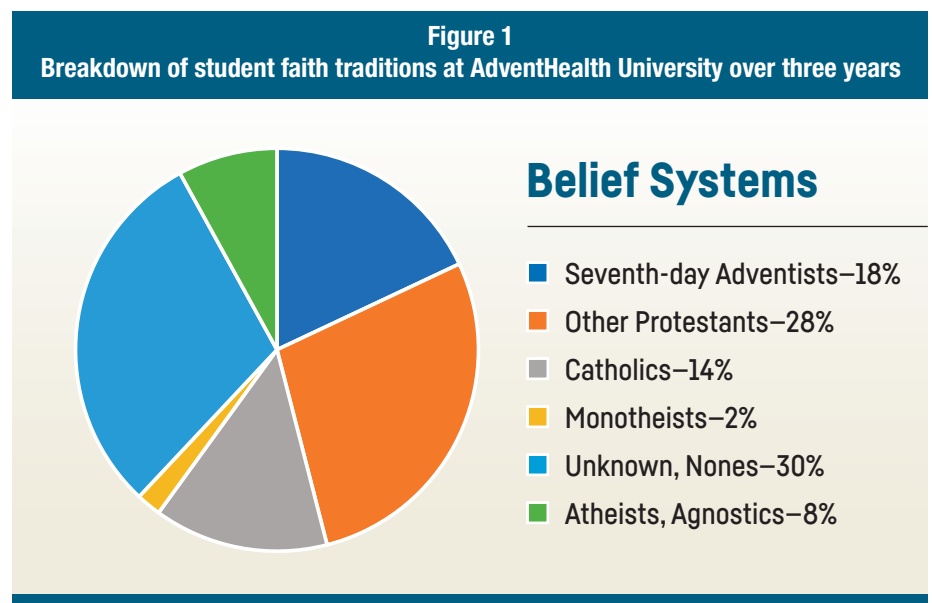
About Our Institution

AdventHealth University (AHU), then Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences, accepted its first students almost 30 years ago. The institution was established from the outset as a Seventh-day Adventist school specializing in health-sciences education and is accredited by both denominational and public entities. Throughout its history, its primary focus has been on educating individuals in the allied-health sciences, e.g., occupational therapy, nursing, imaging sciences, physician's assistant, physical therapy, etc. AHU is unique in comparison to most of our sister colleges and universities in the North American Division because most of our students are not Seventh-day Adventists.

Over AHU's history, its student population has averaged approximately 18 percent Seventh-day Adventist (see Figure 1). The school thus has always had a spiritually and culturally diverse student body, although more than 90 percent of its students self-report religious affiliations and spiritual journeys.

the importance of "whole-person" care—careful nurture of mind, body, and spirit—would likely not be as well incorporated into student worldviews if they couldn't recognize the need to integrate faith and science. This could result in our school producing health practitioners who are comfortable only in either the realm of religion or the realm of science, or practitioners who see them as conflicting areas of content, which could pose an impediment to whole-person care. As a result, by 2005, an upper-division undergraduate course that discussed science and religious ideologies was added to the curriculum.

Figure 1
Breakdown of student faith traditions at AdventHealth University over three years

Belief Systems

- Seventh-day Adventists—18%
- Other Protestants—28%
- Catholics—14%
- Monotheists—2%
- Unknown, Nones—30%
- Atheists, Agnostics—8%

Because of AHU's Seventh-day Adventist mission, in conjunction with the necessity to educate students for the demands of the health sciences, the administration and biomedical faculty recognized the need to develop a course covering topics in science and religion. Experience revealed that just having separate science and religion courses did not provide students with a sufficient understanding of the mutually beneficial relationships science and religion can have. Our observations and experience as educators indicated that separate courses of religion and science inadvertently supported the assumption that these two domains were incompatible. We recognized that

The Course: Issues in Science and Religion

The course we teach is called "Issues in Science and Religion." It is cross listed in biology and religion: BIOL/REPH 475. Students can earn upper-division credit in either science or religion. Initially, this course was an upper-division elective; but departmental leadership in conjunction with senior administration considered the material so ideologically valuable that within a few years of its initiation, the course was voted to be a required course for all bachelor's degrees in the

Department of Health and Biomedical Sciences (BS in Health Sciences; BS in Biomedical Sciences).

The course is led by two Seventh-day Adventist professionals: one trained in biology, the other in religion. In this course, students are exposed to 20 lectures that cover a broad range of topics—including theodicy, miracles, theories of origin, strengths and weaknesses of evolution, intelligent design, and creation. Our dialogue approach, however, is not only a juxtaposition of science on one side, religion on the other for the topics covered, but also provides deeper discussion and dialogue regarding contemporary issues within the sciences and religion. In addition to the topics mentioned above, we explore Noachian flood theories, past extinction events, the geologic column, radiometric dating techniques, and fossils as well as, but not limited to, hermeneutics, the philosophy of science, logic and fallacies, cognitive dissonance, and limits of science and religion.

We state our biases for intelligent design from the outset, which are pivotally founded on Seventh-day Adventist theology. However, we are university professors. We do not believe it is appropriate to proselytize (religion or science) to our students, whom we view as our colleagues. There is no attempt to convince our students to embrace our convictions. But of course, when asked about our beliefs, we will respond in kind, to facilitate dialogue and encourage open discourse, questions, and a diversity of ideas. Because of the diversity of our students, we are sensitive about being inclusive. We do not berate an atheist student, for example, for articulating atheistic views, nor do we congratulate a believer for his or her faith. In each case, we assess how well students can summarize their views (evidence-based, well-supported) and what type of tone they use to profess their ideas (e.g., neutral, dismissive, condescending, combative, congenial, etc.).

This educational style with its

seeming absence of evangelizing has made some people uncomfortable. The implicit fear was that we might "lose" some faith-based students. However, what we have found appears to be quite the opposite.

Methods

Our analysis goal was to conduct an initial, exploratory assessment of

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whether our pedagogy was possibly reducing students' confidence about their view of God and suffering in the world. To do this, we utilized a single-cohort and a pre- and post-testing design: All students, in each course, could take the pre- and post-tests. Pre- and post-testing methods can be effective in detecting the effects of teaching methods.[19] Our analysis question was this: *Does our dialogue design affect student confidence in their belief in the existence of God and their understanding of pain and suffering in the world?*

To assess student confidence regarding their answers to two worldview questions, we instituted a straightforward survey in our course. Our study began in 2017, and at the very beginning of the first session of the course, we asked students to self-report, on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (with "1" being the lowest rating and "5" the highest), their reactions to these questions: (1) "How confident are you that there is a God/deity?" and (2) "How confident are you in your response to suffering?" During the final session, we asked students to again self-report their confidences regarding the same questions, using the same Likert scale.

Likert-scale data are ordinal-measurement scale values, which are not amenable to quantitative analytical techniques.[20] Often, though, ordinal data are assessed using averages or other ratio-level assessments. Since averages or percentage calculations of ordinal-scale data can provide heuristic, qualitative-level comparisons only, we pooled all Likert-scale responses for the analysis period and then calculated the frequency of the pre- and post-test, self-reported Likert rankings: the cumulative total number of 1's, 2's, 3's, 4's, and 5's. From the pooled pre-test and pooled post-test frequency data,[21] we then calculated the overall proportions of the different Likert-scale choices for both questions on the pre- and post-assessments. We conducted a chi-square test for independence on the pre- and post-assessment Likert responses for each question. Our null hypothesis: *The distribution of student Likert responses on the post-assessment would be independent, not different, from the pre-assessment responses.*

Results

For each trimester analyzed, average student confidences for both questions tended to remain similar or increase. Results from the overall averages for the six trimesters of the study (Fall 2017 through Fall 2020) showed that average confidence in students' belief in God/deity increased from 4.47 to 4.55 (a two percent increase);

whereas the overall average of Likert rankings for confidence in their response to pain and suffering increased from 4.01 to 4.47 (an 11 percent increase).

Regarding the frequency and proportion analyses for the pooled calculations for both confidence questions, the Likert responses shifted more to the "very confident" side (see Figure 2A). Focusing on the results of the question about students' confidence in there being a God (Figure 2A), at the beginning of the course, 65 percent of the students who responded stated that they were "very confident" there is a God. By the end of the course, 73 percent of the respondents claimed to be "very confident" there is a God (Figure 2A). Even though fewer students responded to the post-assessment due to normal attrition, the proportions for post-assessment are not just a function of a smaller sample size. The raw number was 58 students selecting "5" on the post-assessment (57 on the pre-assessment), and the slope of the curve from "not confident" to "very confident" was steeper on the post-assessment than the pre-assessment (Figure 2A).

The results of the pre- and post-assessments of student confidence about their response to suffering in the world were even more dramatic than the results regarding their belief in a God. Overall, on the pre-assessment, 25 percent, 37.5 percent, and 35 percent of the students chose a confidence level of "3," "4," or "5," respectively (see Figure 2B). In the same Likert-scale order, on the post-assessment, 7.7 percent, 28 percent, and 63.5 percent responded with these rankings, respectively (Figure 2B). In raw numbers, the number of students choosing a "5" on the pretest for this question was 31. By contrast, 48 students chose a "5" as their confidence level on the post-assessment.

Comparison of the pre- and post-assessment distributions of student Likert-scale choices for both worldview questions (belief in God and understanding the problem of suffering) showed that the number and proportion of students choosing the response "very confident" increased after having taken Issues in Science and Religion (Figures 2A and B).

The results of the chi-square statistical tests for independence indicated that the pre- and post-test confidence results for student belief in God were not different: X^2 (df = 4, N = 165) = 2.4, p = 0.66. This result was somewhat expected, as at pre-assessment, students' confidence in their belief in God was already weighted heavily toward "very confident." These results leave little "room at the top" for the post-assessment. Nevertheless, the post-assessment average increased, as did the proportion of students responding with a "5" (Figure 2A).

The results of chi-square test for student confidence regarding the problem of pain and suffering were rather different from the previous response. Post-assessment student responses regarding their confidence responding to the problem of suffering were significantly different from their pre-assessment responses: X^2 (df = 4, N = 166) = 14.45, p = 0.006. This result indicates that the post-assessment responses were not independent of learning during the course and—together with increases in students' confidence in their belief in God—that this course does not seem to negatively affect some aspects of faith-based worldviews.

Figure 2A

Proportion of Likert-scale responses for the pre- and post-survey of students' confidence regarding two worldview questions: (A) confidence in their belief in God, and (B) confidence in their understanding of suffering in the world.

A
Proportions of cumulative total Likert-scale responses for "How confident are you that there is a God/deity?"; pre- and post-assessments

Pre-Proportions
Post-Proportions

Likert Scale: 1 = not confident; 5 = very confident

N = 78 Post-Proportions
N = 87 Pre-Proportions

We found that student worldviews appeared to have been affected after having taken Issues in Science and Religion in the following ways: Students' belief in God did not diminish, and their understanding of the problem of suffering was enhanced (Figures 2A and 2B). We expected *a priori* that because of the preponderance of believers attending our institution, belief in God would be weighted toward the more confident segment of the analysis. And even though our experience suggested that students' confidence in their belief in God entering the course would not likely be diminished after encountering the course materials, the post-assessment findings reassured us that our observations were well founded.

What was more surprising was the extraordinary increase in student confidence regarding their response to suffering (see Figure 2B). Of course, we feel excited that a course focused on science and religion can support

and enhance emerging adult theistic understanding. Since AHU is primarily a health-care education university, the success in supporting students' spiritual confidence in their understanding of suffering is especially comforting. Of course, REPH/BIOL 475 is not solely capable of addressing the problem of pain; other courses that provide a God-centered approach to understanding suffering in the world (e.g., "Issues in Grieving and Loss") are also offered in the Department of Health and Biomedical Sciences. Our course forms part of a suite of courses that intellectually strengthen students' ability to respond to suffering as they prepare to enter various health-care professions. However, the course Issues in Science and Religion forms an educational bridge between the science, religion, and ethics courses.

In a larger context, though, being able to thoughtfully regard this problem of suffering in the world is important, as the problem of pain is often
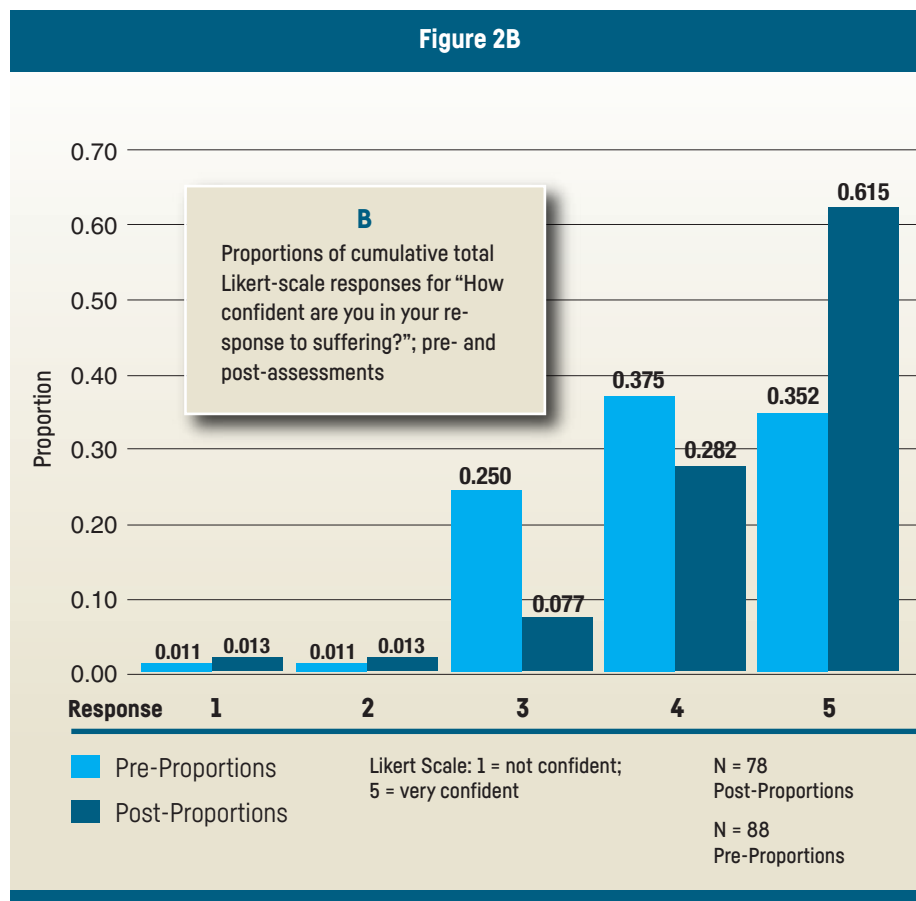
cited as the main reason for losing faith.[22] Lee Strobel in *The Case for Faith* lists the problem of pain as the top reason people reject Christianity.[23] Since a major academic goal of the authors of this article, and for Seventh-day Adventist higher education in general, is to assist and support student religious understanding, desire, and adherence, we have concluded that our course can positively and beneficially increase student understanding of suffering.

Returning to the opening story about the student in religious crisis regarding evolution, the minister invited dialogue and discussion with the student instead of being defensive or dismissive. We address evolution/creation in like manner: We present and discuss these worldviews on their merits while noting their limitations. For example, we spend 90 minutes discussing the strengths of evolutionary theory, which can be very disconcerting to students who have been taught primarily young-Earth creationism. In the very next class, however, we describe the weaknesses, limits, and flaws of evolution, not merely from a creationist standpoint, but also based on evolutionary research and literature itself! This in turn can be quite disconcerting to those students who were primarily reared to accept evolutionary thought. Students often remark that in the past, when they would ask questions about evolution, the responses would pit creationism against evolution. When students learn that evolutionary theory faces real questions posed by evolutionary researchers, they begin to realize that worldviews have strengths and weaknesses. One need not necessarily attack one worldview through the lens of another; each worldview can be discussed within its own intellectual framework.

Conclusion

Most of our students are somewhat surprised to learn that the "giants" of modern science (Bacon, Newton, Gali-

Figure 2B

B

Proportions of cumulative total Likert-scale responses for "How confident are you in your response to suffering?"; pre- and post-assessments

Pre-Proportions
Post-Proportions

Likert Scale: 1 = not confident; 5 = very confident

N = 78 Post-Proportions

N = 88 Pre-Proportions

leo, Priestley, to name a few) were believers, and it was precisely their belief in a non-arbitrary, rational God that was a major impetus for them doing science in the first place. More generally, much of the development of modern science can be directly linked to a Christian worldview.[24] We are both supporters of science and religion. Considering the amount of hubris regarding the power of science that media portrays, when students learn that even world-renowned scientists state that science has limits,[25] we suggest that this helps them better understand the place of religion/faith in their lives.

It may seem counterintuitive to suggest that studying evolution would be appropriate in a Seventh-day Adventist university, as this often stimulates fear that students might lose faith. Our experience and analysis suggest that engaging in a dialogue that includes evolution does not have to diminish faith (see Figure 2A). Students crave an environment where all questions are welcomed and where all theories are thoroughly explored.[26] Questions are the foundation of learning, and yet there seems to be a hesitancy to review theories that may be opposed to one's system of belief.

We believe that open dialogue and discussion regarding religious as well as secular thought, including evolutionary theory, is better for a well-rounded education and for spiritual nourishment than dismissal of ideas that appear to be counter to, for example, creation or intelligent design. We believe that asking students to engage with alternate views can act as an "intellectual vaccine." Such "cognitive inoculations," we suggest, could prevent worldview "shock." Educating through dialogue on complementary perspectives of science and religion is also part of our spirituality model at AHU.[27]

The metaphor of our model is that our institution should be a "watering hole" of spiritual refreshment drawing in those who thirst, and not a 'fenced in' model of those on the "inside" separated from those who are "outside." Our institution is very diverse, ethnically, racially, and spiritually (as shown in Figure 1), and as a result, our students are on different spiritual journeys. Although we can't control what our students will encounter in the "real world," we can provide an intellectual foundation for their emerging adult understanding through how we educate, in the classroom and through student encounters, so that our students' confidence in their faith-based worldview won't be cracked or broken when struck by other well-accepted and articulated ideologies.

Students' reactions to this class have been fascinating to read. During the final two weeks of the class, they are asked to write a position paper in which they describe the impact this course has had on them personally. While there were a lot of great testimonies (and some frustrations detailed), most of the students stated that this class had a profound impact on them. For example, "I had decided atheism as the ideology which appealed the most to me. . . . I used to believe that science was on the opposite . . . end of a battlefield [from religion]. . . . I now view it as two kids playing in a park with each trying to lift the other one higher and higher onto a tree."

Another example, "With the help of material from the class Issues in Science and Religion strengthening my stance, although they have some differences, I believe that science and religion share some similarities, even explaining some events where the other cannot."

And a third: "Before I began this class, I was very excited to push my thinking outside of the box by asking myself questions outside of my comfort zone. I was raised in a [religious] household full of scientists and mathematicians. . . . This class was a good opportunity to prove to myself that even when I have to ask myself questions outside of my comfort zone, my God is still real, and science is still reliable. I still need one to understand another and vice versa."

In conclusion, we found our educating technique, when applied to what could be a controversial course/topic(s), was supported, based on our findings and student comments. We hope that when our students return to their home churches or continue their studies at other universities, instead of spiritual crisis, they will experience spiritual renewal of God's two books: the Bible and the book of nature. ✐

Box 1. Religion and Science Resources for Further Reading

Leonard Brand and Arthur Chadwick, *Faith, Reason, and Earth History: A Paradigm of Earth and Biological Origins by Intelligent Design,* 3rd ed. (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2016), specifically chapters 8 and 10.

Leonard Brand, *Creation? Really?* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2019).

Geoscience Research Institute has several resources (https://www.grisda.org/resources1) available on the topic of religion and science. From articles (https://www.grisda.org/articles) to books (https://www.grisda.org/books) to educational websites (https://www.grisda.org/top-ten-websites) and much more.

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "What Adventists Believe About Creation" (2020): https://www.adventist.org/creation/. See also https://www.adventist.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ADV-28Beliefs2020.pdf.

L. James Gibson, Ronnie Nalin, and Humberto Rasi, eds., *Design and Catastrophe: 51 Scientists Explore Evidence in Nature* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2021).

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MOTIVATING STUDENTS

in the Religion Classroom

Applying Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

O ne of the more frustrating challenges teachers face is lack of motivation in their students. Teachers put years into their own education and hours into lesson plans in efforts to connect with their students and to spark a curiosity that drives knowledge acquisition and retention as well as personal growth. In most parts of the world, teachers enroll in professional-development courses and

workshops for training in how to be better teachers, to improve instructional practices, and to convey knowledge more effectively. Governments invest billions of dollars annually in training programs and private consultants,[1] as do entities that supervise instruction in Seventh-day Adventist schools.[2] In many parts of the world, professional development is tied to promotion and salary increases.[3]

Yet, even with all this effort, teachers still encounter students who are unmotivated to learn. Parents,

politicians, and educational leaders are sometimes quick to blame teachers for struggling students. However, there is a difference between students who are truly struggling because of cognitive challenges and ones who are simply unmotivated. Most teachers do everything possible to make the classroom a "motivating" environment, but sometimes these approaches fail to motivate certain students due to factors beyond the

BY TIMOTHY ALAN FLOYD

teacher's control (i.e., the child's health, peer influences, the environment at home or in the community, war and/or civil unrest, the child's psyche and disposition, etc.). Not only can this frustrate the teacher, but it can also lead to discouragement and questions about his or her professional effectiveness and career choice. And, beyond the impact on the individual teacher, students' lack of motivation can affect the reputation of the school and the credibility of instruction being offered.

Motivation

According to Lo, motivation is an "internal state that arouses, directs and maintains behavior."[4] Many factors influence children's motivation, some of which are external (or in the child's environment), while others are internal and originate within the child's psyche. Lavoie maintains that no one is truly unmotivated; people are always motivated by *something*. Teachers can discover reasons for lack of motivation by asking questions such as these: "What is motivating this behavior?" or "What is getting in the way of motivating these students in the direction that I want them to be motivated?"[5] Asking questions can help uncover extrinsic and intrinsic factors that are affecting motivation.

Extrinsic Forces Affecting Motivation

Extrinsic motivation is "created by an external force such as a reward or a punishment."[6] Rewards can include a privilege or change in classroom status or may be monetary. Academic rewards may include high grades or a grade-point average that results from the student's hard work to achieve and succeed in school. In some religious traditions, the "reward" is for behavior that is "work-" or merit-based.

In the religion classroom, students may believe that their good behavior can gain them favor with God, and this can be a strong motivator for students to behave in ways that the religion prescribes.[7] As students learn the

religious expectations, they generally strive to attain those standards in their own lives. However, the desired outcome in religion classes is that students will perceive their grades as indicators of their mastery of the content and not as a measure of their spirituality.

Extrinsic motivation can also include the concept of punishment. Some religious traditions place a strong emphasis on fear of punish-

> Studies show that the best motivators are the ones that come from within the students themselves, not from external forces. The challenge for teachers is how to create that curiosity and inspire the students to want to know more.

ment in attempting to maintain a desired behavioral standard (i.e., good behavior is rewarded; bad behavior is punished). Regardless of how accurate the theology behind the coercion, inevitably some adherents behave only to avoid punishment.

Other extrinsic motivational forces include parental pressure and social or academic competition. Students usually desire to please their parents and will strive for success to make them happy. This is often a cultural

factor. Some cultures place a lot more emphasis on success than others. Likewise, social competition can be a cultural factor. Students can be motivated to succeed or may make the decision not to try based on how well their peers are doing in the class. Teachers should be aware of the various aspects of extrinsic motivation so that they can help students achieve success.

Intrinsic Forces Affecting Motivation

Intrinsic motivators are forces that come from within oneself, and include the desire for fulfillment, personal satisfaction, and finding a moral value in something. According to Deci, Koestner, and Ryan, intrinsic motivation is more effective than extrinsic motivational reward. Their research indicated that:

"Tangible rewards—both material rewards, such as pizza parties for reading books, and symbolic rewards, such as good student awards—are widely advocated by many educators and are used in many classrooms, yet the evidence suggests that these rewards tend to undermine intrinsic motivation for the rewarded activity. . . . Rather than focusing rewards for motivating students' learning, it is important to focus more on how to facilitate intrinsic motivation."[8]

Studies show that the best motivators are the ones that come from within the students themselves, not from external forces.[9] The challenge for teachers is how to create that curiosity and inspire the students to want to know more. In the religion classroom, some of these goals can be accomplished by focusing on the natural wonder contained in the study of religion; however, to ensure that the class provides a wholistic educational experience, the teacher will need to skillfully manage classroom discussions and provide a variety of relevant experiences.

Intrinsic motivation can be challenging to develop in religion classes. Oftentimes students have been immersed in their beliefs since birth and have lost the curiosity and wonder

that a lot of new believers experience. Thus, the religion teacher faces the challenge of keeping students engaged and interested while he or she works with the same beliefs and stories that many of them have heard throughout their lives.

Motivation in the Context of Religion Classes

In most Adventist schools, religion classes are taught by certified teachers. At the primary and elementary level, religion is usually taught by generalists—teachers who also provide instruction in other subject areas such as language arts, science, mathematics, history, etc. At the 9-12 level, although individuals teaching religion are usually certified to teach the subject, they may have majored in other subjects, or may have experience as a pastor or chaplain but no formal pedagogical coursework. At the college and university level, religion teachers are specialists who have at least a Master's degree and additional credits in religion or theology and training in how to teach religion.[10] This article is oriented toward educators who teach religion classes at the high school and undergraduate levels.

Within the religion classroom, there is an additional axiological emphasis, and teachers are faced with additional motivational challenges—specifically, the ethical moral pressure that comes from the school's religious tradition. While teachers in all disciplines encounter challenging topics and need to consider how to address them, religion teachers face these types of challenges more often, since this is the class where questions more readily arise regarding how to interpret what the Bible says.

In the religion class, students may "turn off" if they disagree about the decision for the course to deal with a challenging topic or with the teacher's presentation of the subject. This "turning off" is even more likely if the student feels strongly about or has a strong moral objection to the subject. Conversely, depending on the atti-

tudes and beliefs held by the students' parents and community, students may be more motivated to delve into questions they may have about challenging topics. These attitudes are examples of why identifying motivating factors in the religion classroom is paramount to effective teaching.
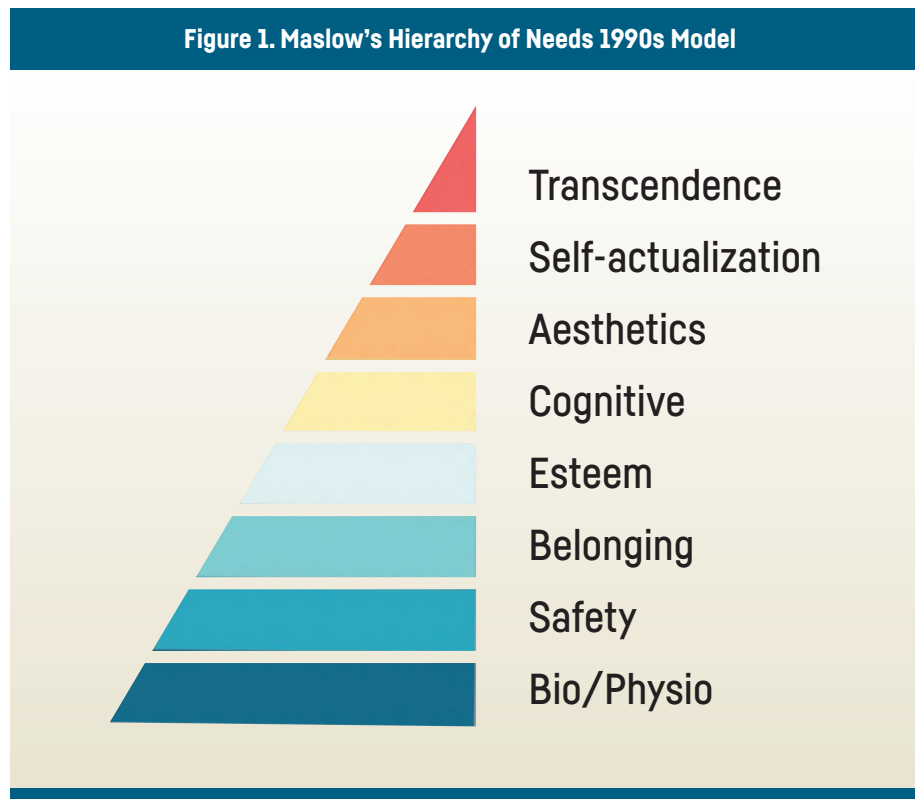
Maslow and Motivation

Abraham Maslow, often considered the leading scholar on motivation, posited that human beings need to feel safe in order to learn. In his original work, Maslow identified five basic needs that drive motivation in every human being (biological and physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization). As time went on, he added cognitive, aesthetic, and transcendence needs to his list, making a total of eight needs (see Figure 1) that influence and shape motivation in a person.[11] When these needs are fulfilled, a person is more likely to become motivated. Maslow pointed out that these needs are interrelated and build upon one another in a hierarchical structure. If

children's most basic needs are not met, this increases the challenge of motivating them to learn. Maslow's hierarchy of needs will provide a framework for a large part of the following discussion. Only by understanding and identifying students' fundamental needs can teachers learn how to address the challenges of motivation more effectively.

1. Biological/Physiological Needs

Human beings' physical (biological/physiological) needs include air, food, drink, shelter, sleep, and warmth. If those needs are met, the student is more likely to be receptive to learning. However, if one or more of these needs is not met, the student will have a more difficult time focusing and opening up to the learning process. For example, if a student is hungry or tired, he or she may not be able to focus or think clearly. In many countries, public and private non-profit schools receive government assistance to provide students with meals so that hunger will not impede their learning.[12] Teachers whose classes immediately precede

Figure 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs 1990s Model

- Transcendence
- Self-actualization
- Aesthetics
- Cognitive
- Esteem
- Belonging
- Safety
- Bio/Physio

the school lunch break need to contextualize student outbursts, conflict, inattentiveness, and other hunger-related behaviors during this time.

2. Safety Needs

Every student needs to feel protected and secure. Safety needs should be met not only at home, but also at school, at church, and within the community. Unfortunately, threats to safety are prevalent in some of these places. In most states within the United States, teachers are mandated reporters for suspected child abuse.[13]

And, within all classrooms, students must feel as though classroom rules and boundaries are firmly in place in order to be motivated to share information or opinions. Teachers and administrators are responsible for ensuring that students are physically safe, and students must be held responsible for following classroom procedures and looking out for one another.[14]

However, safety involves both physical and emotional issues. If a student does not feel emotionally safe in a classroom, there is a greater chance he or she will withdraw and avoid sharing thoughts or opinions. Establishing classroom routines that build positive interactions among students, creating an atmosphere that welcomes questions, and modeling ways to agree and disagree are some ways teachers can ensure that students experience emotional safety. This leads us into the third level of needs.

3. Belonging and Love Needs

Maslow's social needs include belonging, love, and acceptance. Author and speaker Leonard Sweet affirmed this human truth when he said that "people want to belong before they believe, if they don't feel like they belong, they won't want to believe."[15] This concept is especially true in a classroom context: If the student does not feel accepted, he or she will not feel comfortable voicing an opinion in class and will be less likely to speak up or respond to questions. However, if a student feels accepted, loved, and appreciated, he or she is then more likely to be motivated to become involved and engaged in the class. The religion classroom should be a place where students experience a sense of belonging, not only in terms of the environment, but also in terms of being a child of God and belonging to the family of God.

> The need to understand is a cognitive need that occurs in every subject area where differences of opinion exist; however, in the religion classroom, unanswered questions can leave students feeling unsatisfied in their quest to "understand" and have a long-term impact on their faith journey.

4. Esteem Needs

The fourth need in Maslow's hierarchy relates to esteem; this includes achievement, self-esteem, and independence. In the Christian classroom, regardless of subject area, students can experience the traditional results of academic success; however, they can also experience feelings of self-awareness in knowing and understanding their religious beliefs. Many project-based assignments can help students fulfill this need, especially ones that involve service-oriented activities. Beyond assignments, though, this need is fulfilled by teachers, administrators, and staff who build students up with words of affirmation and acts of kindness, a warm, nurturing environment, and opportunities for students to positively interact with one another.

5. Cognitive Needs

Added to Maslow's hierarchy in the 1970s, cognitive needs relate to the individual's desire to know and find meaning. According to Maslow, humans experience curiosity and a thirst for knowledge.[16] The need to understand is a cognitive need that occurs in every subject area where differences of opinion exist; however, in the religion classroom, unanswered questions can leave students feeling unsatisfied in their quest to "understand" and have a long-term impact on their faith journey. Teachers need to provide opportunities for students to ask questions, discuss ideas, study a variety of sources, and find answers. Too often, teachers pass over hard questions or say, "that is not important right now," or "you should not ask questions like that." Students experience greater safety and security if they feel that their teacher is interested in their questions, even if they do not get a direct answer. The fact that a teacher takes the time to listen and helps guide the student through problem solving, whether individually or within the classroom setting, will mean worlds to that student.

6. Aesthetic Needs

Aesthetic needs are met through contemplation of beauty found in nature, poetry, art, and songs. In the early church, many people were illiterate. To compensate for this, cathedrals were built, and churches were filled with art such as stained glass, paintings, and sculptures. This art, and even song, told the Bible stories using visual and auditory aids. Students today need to be reminded of the beauty that is found in and emerges from religious traditions. The religion classroom should be a place

where students are taught to see the beauty in religion; and this can be done through cross-curricular collaboration with teachers of other subject areas such as music, art, literature, and poetry, and through assignments and worship experiences that incorporate each of these content areas.

7. Self-Actualization Needs

Self-actualization may be one of the most significant student needs in relation to the religion classroom because of the focus on the change the gospel can make in each person's life. McLeod points out an important difference in Maslow's work compared to other theorists of his time: "Instead of focusing on psychopathology and what goes wrong with people, Maslow formulated a more positive account of human behavior with focused on what goes right. He was interested in human potential, and how we fulfill that potential . . . human motivation is based on people seeking fulfillment and change through personal growth."[17] Self-actualization is the quest for personal growth and fulfillment. Maslow wrote, "even if all these needs are satisfied, we may still often (if not always) expect that a new discontent and restlessness will soon develop, unless the individual is doing what he is fitted for."[18]

In every class, students should be taught to identify and develop their potential. In the religion classroom, one way of doing this is to help students identify their "spiritual gifts," dispositions associated with living the Christian life (1 Corinthians 12:7 and 28; Romans 12:6-8). In teaching students about these concepts, the teacher should provide opportunities for students to develop and use their gifts in ways that are applicable and relevant to real life through opportunities for volunteer service, personal ministry, and community engagement.

8. Transcendence Needs

The final level of Maslow's hierarchy is the need for transcendence. This essentially assumes that a person

who is fully satisfied will help other people reach their full potential. Religion teachers can provide opportunities for students to reach out to share or encourage others through cooperative learning exercises or community-service projects. Religion teachers can provide students with examples of how a relationship with Jesus Christ leads fulfilment and complete transformation—the work of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ezekiel 36:26; Philippians 1:6). However, teachers can only provide *opportunities* for students to reach their full potential; this last goal has to be something that students want to achieve on their own. It is not something that can be forced on them.

Motivational Strategies for Religion Teachers

Religion teachers can use several motivational strategies to engage their students. In addition to demonstrating an interest in each student, creating practical assignments with achievable goals, and being cognizant of the extrinsic and intrinsic factors that impact student motivation, teachers must be enthusiastic about their students—they need to like working with young people, to be passionate about their content area, and enthusiastic about life in general.

1. Be Enthusiastic Toward Your Students, the Subject, and Life in General.

Author Ellen G. White stated that "an important element in educational work is enthusiasm. . . . The teacher in his work is dealing with things real, and he should speak of them with all the force and enthusiasm which a knowledge of their reality and importance can inspire."[19] When the teacher is enthusiastic, he or she is more likely to be socially accepted by the students and to be able to encourage students to be interested in and ex-

cited about life and about the place religion will have in their lives. This enthusiasm is intrinsic; it should come from within, from a place of relationship with Christ. If the teacher gives the impression that a particular lesson is dull or irrelevant to him or her, the students will likely also share that opinion. A teacher must be excited and enthusiastic about each lesson, even if its content is not particularly exciting.

Also, during each class period, the teacher should be sure that he or she shows enthusiasm in greeting the students and by calling them by their names. This will help students know that they are known, accepted, appreciated, and valued by the teacher. When an enthusiastic teacher shows the students that he or she is motivated about the class and about their education, students will in turn be more inspired to learn.

2. Demonstrate Genuine Interest in Each Student.

The expression of personal interest by a significant adult helps to fulfill the student's need to be known and accepted. Showing interest in each student enables the teacher to connect with him or her on a personal, wholistic level (e.g., Did the student have adequate food today? Does he or she have a safe place to shelter and study? Is he or she getting enough sleep?). Ellen White wrote, "The true educator, keeping in view what his pupils may become, will recognize the value of the material upon which he is working. He will take a personal interest in each pupil and will seek to develop all his powers. However imperfect, every effort to conform to right principles will be encouraged."[20]

Showing interest can be done in many ways.[21] For example, teachers can ask students about their day and pause to listen to the response. By starting with surface-level conversation, the teacher can get a feel for how each student's life is going at that moment. After a relationship has been established (often over a period of time, through demonstrating authentic and sincere interest), the teacher is

then able to pursue a deeper friendship with that student for example, by inquiring about his or her family life or hobbies. There are many ways a teacher can take interest in a student's life, but authentic kindness can motivate a student to take what the teacher says seriously and want to learn from him or her.

3. Make the Work Practical and Achievable.

If students see that the classwork is relevant and applicable to their lives, they will be more likely to experience positive levels of esteem and cognitive fulfillment. Many secondary-level religion teachers may also teach other subjects or have other duties at the school. Unfortunately, because of this, some teachers give a lot of "busy work," rather than assignments with authentic purpose. The religion class requires rigorous planning and thoughtful attention. To think otherwise is a mistake. Religion teachers must maintain their professional integrity and commitment to all their duties. When students see that they are able to learn, and have opportunities to apply what they are learning through practical experiences, they are more likely to believe that the material it is actually useful, and they will be more motivated to learn.

4. Be Cognizant of the Classroom Environment.

If the environment is not conducive to student safety, attention, or learning, the teacher should change it as soon as possible. He or she should maintain order and classroom structure in regard to rules and boundaries to ensure that all students feel safe to share their input and feel valued, thereby fulfilling each one's safety and belonging needs.

Religion teachers should also consider incorporating technology and the arts to help students fulfill their aesthetic needs. Allowing time for journaling or other personal reflective assignments can help to ensure that students achieve personal growth throughout the school year. This gives

students opportunities to self-actualize. Additionally, religion teachers need to provide students with opportunities to serve their fellow classmates and their community to help ensure the fulfillment of their transcendence needs.

Conclusion

Motivation is an internal state that arouses, directs, and maintains behavior. There are many factors that shape a child's motivation, some of which are environmental, while others are directed from within the child. If Lavoie is right, that "people are always motivated by something," then the challenge of the religion teacher is to identify whatever obstacles to learning might exist in the classroom environment as well as in each student's life. Religion teachers have the privilege of being able to nurture, model, and demonstrate God's love, showing students the joy of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. If the religion teacher has prepared, cleared obstacles to learning, and established that he or she cares about the student, there is a greater chance that the student will not only succeed, but also gain a better understanding of the world around him or her. ✐

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Mahlon Ellsworth Olsen
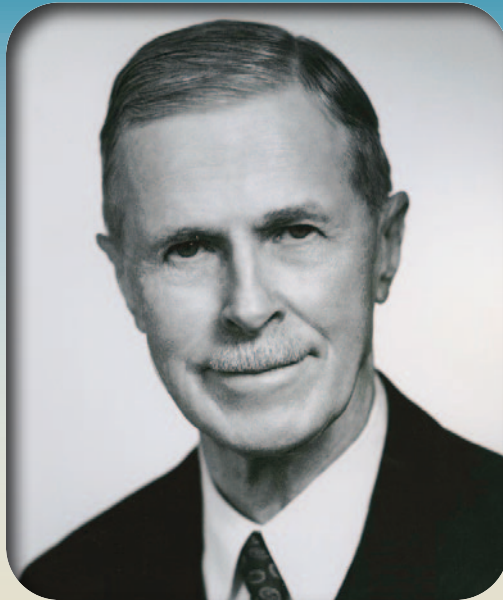
PIONEER ADVENTIST EDUCATOR

Seventh-day Adventist education has been shaped by its early advocates and pioneers. Within this group we find James and Ellen White, Martha Byington, Goodloe Harper Bell, J. N. Andrews, W. W. Prescott, Frederick Griggs, E. A. Sutherland, and Percy T. Magan—familiar names, even today, to many Adventist educators. Although perhaps less known, other individuals also made significant contributions. Among these was Mahlon Ellsworth (M. E.) Olsen.

Early Years (1873-1899)

M. E. Olsen was born in 1873 to Ole (O. A.) and Jennie Olsen, who had separately emigrated early in life from Norway to the United States. O. A. Olsen's parents, having settled in southern Wisconsin, were among the first Scandinavians to join the Adventist denomination. James White, one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, took a special interest in Ole and often referred to him as "my boy."[1]

As a child, Mahlon Olsen was personally acquainted with James and Ellen White. He heard them speak at camp meetings, and they were guests at the Olsen home. Mahlon recalled: "On their first visit they looked over our small collection of books, somewhat the worse for wear, and before leaving they enriched our little library with four volumes of stories bearing the title *Sabbath Readings*. Mrs. White had herself selected the stories in these very readable books."[2]

Mahlon and his older brother, Alfred Berthier Olsen, felt at home with Mrs. White as she did not seem to mind their play. She wrote personal messages in the brothers' autograph albums. Mahlon Olsen would later write, "We children had favorite aunts and uncles, but even near relatives did not more completely win our hearts and affections than did James and Ellen White."[3]

In 1886, O. A. Olsen was asked to serve as a missionary, and the family moved to Christiania (Oslo), Norway. In the summer of the next year, Mrs. White visited the Olsen family. Together, they held the first Adventist

BY JOHN WESLEY TAYLOR V

camp meeting in Europe, with Ellen White as the guest speaker.[4]

O. A. Olsen was called to be president of the General Conference in 1888, and the family returned to America. There in Battle Creek, Michigan, Mahlon encountered an individual who would significantly influence his life. Goodlow Harper Bell had recently returned to Michigan following his term as principal of South Lancaster Academy in Massachusetts. Olsen wished to study literature, and early one morning found the professor sitting on the edge of his porch, clad in blue jeans and wearing a dilapidated straw hat. "The whole bearing of the man impressed me at once with a sense of dignity and simplicity," Olsen later recalled.[5]

After making sure that Olsen had a genuine interest in the study of literature, Bell agreed to tutor him. Thus began, in Olsen's words, "the most satisfying and fruitful part of my education."[6] Olsen especially came to admire Wordsworth, Bell's favorite poet. Throughout Olsen's life, Bell would

O. A. Olsen's sons (left to right): Alfred Berthier, Mahlon Ellsworth, and Clarence (who died in childhood).

continue to be his inspiration; and although it directly occupied only a dozen years of his life, the teaching of English, and especially literature, was to be Olsen's best-loved work.

Mahlon E. Olsen attended Battle Creek College from 1890 to 1894, where he would graduate from the Classical Course with a Bachelor of Arts degree.[7] After graduation, Mahlon became secretary to his father, who was still president of the General Conference. He also began to take advanced studies in English at the University of Michigan, where his brother, Alfred, was studying medicine.[8] During these years, Olsen would write his first articles for *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald,*[9] an activity that would yield nearly 300 articles in Adventist journals over the course of his life.

In 1899, for example, Olsen reported on the Battle Creek Sanitarium Training School, which had a newly developed correspondence program: "There is yet another large class of young people, as well as those of more advanced age, who desire to engage in medical missionary work, but cannot spend the time and money to take a course at one of our sanitariums. It is to meet the wants of such that the Correspondence Department of the Training-School was started."[10] Correspondence study would become a dominant theme later in Olsen's life.

Moss camp meeting in Norway (1887): O. A. Olsen and Jennie Olsen (seated left), with son Alfred Berthier (standing behind); J. H. Waggoner (center) with Clarence and Mahlon Ellsworth (seated on the ground); W. C. White and Jennie Ings with Ellen G. White (third from right, seated).

## Speaking Out on Health and Education (1900-1909)

In 1900, Mahlon was requested to assist his brother, Alfred, in the Adventist health work in England. The following year, the brothers launched a monthly magazine, *Good Health*, with Mahlon writing an article titled "Juvenile Smoking" for the first issue. When the subscriptions reached 50,000 in the 10th month of publication, the size of the magazine was increased. This first enlarged issue would carry a history of Battle Creek Sanitarium written by M. E. Olsen.

In 1903, M. E. Olsen became managing editor of *Good Health*.[11] Three years later, there were 75,000 subscriptions to the magazine, with free copies placed in all the major British public libraries. *Good Health* was now the health journal with the largest circulation in Britain.[12]

In 1906, the Olsen brothers jointly published a book *The School of Health,* which was intended to be a layman's manual, a "School for Adults."[13] That year, M. E. Olsen also published his own book, *Out-of-Doors*.[14] It was dedicated to Theodore Roosevelt, the outdoor president whom Olsen greatly admired. The book included references to walking and jogging for health—remarkable at a time when these concepts were largely in the future.

In the book, Olsen also began to delineate his educational ideas. He noted that educators focused almost entirely on mental and moral development to the exclusion of physical culture. "They seem to forget," he wrote, "that little boys and girls have bodies as well as minds."[15] Olsen viewed play as educational and advised that children 5 years old needed a playground more than they needed books. He then declared, "If half the time spent by children in brain work were given to physical development, the actual mental progress would be greater."[16]

While in England, Olsen was a delegate to the 1906 education convention held by the Adventist Church. An important action taken at these meetings was the decision that the denomination should endorse a 16-year
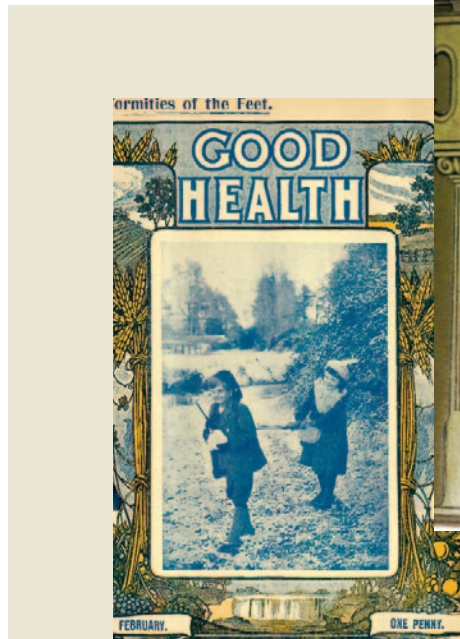
In 1901, the two Olsen brothers launched in England a magazine called *Good Health.*

In 1906, the Olsen brothers jointly published *The School of Health.*

In 1906, M. E. Olsen published his first book, *Out-of-Doors.*
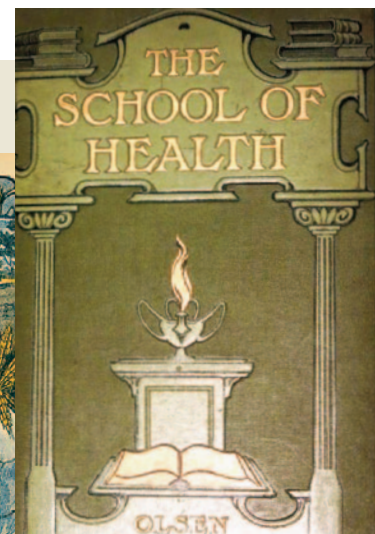
course of study. An abstract of Olsen's address before the convention appeared in *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald:* "Our schools should not only be equal, but surpass, the best schools of the world in the amount of thorough intellectual work required."[17] He advised teachers not to neglect intellectual progress and suggested that a part of the summer vacations should be spent in taking advanced training. The well-educated person, he observed, "thinks not so much of where he is, as whither he is going."[18]

In the March 1909 issue of the *Good Health* journal, Olsen, now editor, broached the topic of sex education. Addressing the temptations to immorality faced by young people, he stated, "The remedy is education.

Every child should be taught the basic principles of hygiene and physiology . . . and when the proper time comes such a knowledge of sexual truths should be given, by pure-minded instructors (preferably the parents) as will satisfy legitimate curiosity and guard against impure habits."[19]

During his years in England, Olsen had decided to work toward a doctorate in English. He had already spent much of 1908 in the United States to that end, and now he felt that he must dedicate himself full time to completing his program.

Work at Various Colleges (1909-1923)

In 1909, Olsen completed, at his own expense, a PhD in English Literature at the University of Michigan.[20] He was the first Seventh-day Adventist to earn a

Stanborough Park, England (circa 1908): M. E. Olsen is standing sixth from the right (back row).

doctorate in English and only the second to receive a PhD.[21] Olsen's dissertation, *Evolution of Biblical Prose*, would later be condensed and published by the denomination as a book.

At denominational headquarters, leadership faced a problem. The world church was calling for missionaries faster than they could be supplied. In response to this need, the Washington Foreign Mission Seminary was organized in Takoma Park, Maryland, in 1907, its purpose to give a practical training for mission service. Two years later, its president, J. L. Shaw, would request the newly minted Dr. Olsen to come and teach English at the institution.

During his first year of teaching, Olsen met Lydia Christensen, daughter of a Danish minister. She had traveled to the seminary to learn English and was living in the home of the General Conference president, A. G. Daniels, a close friend of Olsen. Lydia enrolled in one of Olsen's English classes, and soon Olsen was giving her private English lessons. By the end of the school year, Mahlon and Lydia became engaged and married later that summer in Denmark, and then returning to Takoma Park.[22] In the space of five years, four children—Louise, Alice, Olan, and Yvonne—made the Olsen family complete.

During his tenure as English professor at the seminary, Olsen was intensely involved writing *A History of the Origin and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists*. His purpose was to reproduce "the life of the early times" and follow the pioneer developments of the Adventist Church as it moved around the globe.[23] Articles from *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, firsthand experiences, and interviews and correspondence with missionaries were his principal sources.

The project, first suggested by General Conference president A. G. Daniels, began in the latter part of 1909 and continued throughout this entire period. Chapters were submitted to W. C. White and A. G. Daniels for critique.[24] W. A. Spicer, S. N. Haskell, J. N. Loughborough, Frederick Griggs, and others helped with ideas and materials.

Olsen, however, began to encounter difficulties as he wrote the history. The work was taking much longer to complete than he had envisioned.[25] One of the difficulties was that Olsen was still teaching English four to five days each week at the seminary. Another problem was that Edson White would not cooperate in providing materials regarding the Adventist work in the southern United States. A White family feud had developed, and not even W. C. White could help resolve the situation.[26]

By 1923, however, *Signs of the Times* would publish a series of 13 articles summarizing Olsen's history as it was nearing completion. The book, the first formal history of the denomination, would finally be published in 1925, 16 years after it was begun. "Had I at the onset realized to the full the difficulties that would confront me," Olsen would write, "I am afraid I should have declined the task."[27] Olsen's perseverance, however, prevailed.

Three chapters of the book were devoted to tracing the development of an educational philosophy and of educational institutions. This was a significant emphasis at a time when the publishing work still employed the largest number of trained workers in the denomination. In a commentary devoted to his beloved Professor Bell, Olsen noted that before becoming "the real founder of the school at Battle Creek," Bell held "positions in some of

the best schools of the state."[28]

Olsen believed that Adventist schools were evangelizing agencies and existed for the express purpose of preparing the young people of the church for life and for eternity. The outstanding characteristics of these schools were that the Bible was taught in all years of schooling, that manual labor and correct physical habits were emphasized, and that missionary activities were promoted. "Adventist schools were born of a spiritual necessity," he wrote, "to serve the needs of a spiritual movement."[29]

An educational convention, to which Olsen was a delegate, was held in Berrien Springs in June 1910. The convention discussed textbooks and college teacher qualifications among other matters. During a discussion on higher education, Olsen, who held one of the few doctoral degrees in the denomination at that time, arose and declared: "I myself have never felt free to encourage our young people to look to the university for an education, nor even for special advanced work, except under circumstances that seemed to make it advisable. . . . The fact, however, that it is not wise for our young people to go to the universities of the land, is a most powerful argument in favor of raising the standard in our own colleges. . . . In order to make this possible we need better libraries, better laboratories, and other facilities, and a highly trained force of teachers. Thus we might be able to do a little graduate work in our own leading colleges, which would further reduce the necessity of seeking help from outside institutions."[30]

Later in the convention, Olsen emphasized that strong teacher-training departments should be established at the leading colleges in order that church schoolteachers might be prepared in Adventist institutions. As the convention closed, Olsen recommended that the General Conference Department of Education support the publication of an educational journal.

In 1917, South Lancaster Academy, the school that Bell had established in 1882 in Massachusetts, called Olsen to serve as principal. Olsen found, however, that his role as educational administrator was more challenging than he had imagined. This was due in part to the multiple responsibilities he carried as principal, business manager, English teacher, and superintendent of the industrial faculty.[31] In addition, Olsen was endeavoring to keep up his work on the book about Adventist history.

Under Olsen's leadership, the institution changed its name to Lancaster Junior College. In 1919, Olsen reported that LJC was overflowing with the largest enrollment it had ever attained. He announced that the emphasis in schoolwork was being laid on the more practical subjects such as hydrotherapy, carpentry, sewing, physical culture, cooking, and farming. The purpose of LJC, he declared, was to train Christian workers. By 1920, Olsen observed that 138 missionaries had gone out from its doors. This occasion was celebrated at a special ceremony that involved a dedicatory address by J. L. Shaw.[32]

In 1920, Olsen accepted an offer to head the English Department at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska. While at

M. E. Olsen as English professor at Union College.

Union, under the strong leadership of President Harvey Arch Morrison, the college was accredited as a junior college, and the enrollment climbed to a peak level. Morrison was called to Washington Missionary College in Ta-

koma Park, Maryland, in 1922, however; and a new leader, O. M. John, was selected for Union College. The Adventist educational climate was also changing. The progressive direction previously felt in the Department of Education of the General Conference under Frederick Griggs was giving way to a more traditional perspective. This shift would exert an influence in the events soon to occur at Union.

Under Olsen's guidance, a progressive program had been set up in the English Department. Problems, however, that had been rumbling in the department surfaced abruptly in 1923. Olsen was summarily called before the board and dismissed after 29 years of denominational service. The board justified its action by stating that it was anxious to cut expenses. Part of this sudden move, however, was due to political factors. The other English teacher apparently desired to run the department and had sympathizers on the board. A deeper cause, perhaps, lay in certain questions concerning the books that Olsen required as reading for his English classes.[33]

Although he thought that his brethren had made a mistake, Olsen was not bitter. His problem was to decide what he should do next. On March 30, 1923, Olsen wrote to his old friend, J. L. Shaw, who by now was treasurer of the General Conference.[34] He explained his predicament and expressed his desire to continue in denominational employment if needed. Olsen also noted that someone had inquired regarding his willingness to work at Fireside Correspondence School, which was operated by the Adventist Church. "If there were a desire to enlarge that work, to do some aggressive field work, and put it on a more paying basis as well as to strengthen standards; if there were a real vacancy, I believe I should thoroughly enjoy it." Olsen closed his letter by courageously placing the blame of the situation at Union on himself. "Perhaps there is something very wrong with me. Anyway, I want to learn the lesson and learn it quickly."

M. E. Olsen with wife, Lydia, and children: Louise, Alice, Olan, and Yvonne.

Shaw replied on April 18. Olsen's case had been considered at the Spring Council, but no appointment had yet been made.[35] Unknown to Olsen, however, Shaw had already been appointed to a committee to locate a job for Olsen within the denomination and had suggested that Olsen head up Fireside.

Leading the Correspondence School (1923-1946)

The Seventh-day Adventist Church had attempted several correspondence schools around the turn of the century. In the 1880s, Goodloe Harper Bell had started a correspondence course in English.[36] Although well prepared, it did not last long due to financial constraints. The early 1890s saw E. A. Sutherland commence correspondence courses at Walla Walla College. Keene Academy followed suit and developed its own correspondence school.[37]

Within a few years, however, Keene Academy, Walla Walla College, and the Battle Creek Sanitarium institute on which Olsen had reported had all closed their correspondence programs. The correspondence-school idea, however, did not die out in the mind of one of the foremost educational leaders of the church, Frederick Griggs. Under his guidance, the Fireside Correspondence School, located in Washington, D. C., was founded in 1909. It was of general understanding that it was established for the primary purpose of helping those who for any reason were prevented from attending the resident schools.[38]

At the first board meeting, W. E. Howell was designated principal. The Department of Education soon began to absorb more of Howell's time, however, and C. C. Lewis, a former president of Union College, was asked to assume the position in 1913. Ill health, however, forced Lewis to resign in 1922, and Clifton Taylor became acting principal.

It was to this post as principal of Fireside that Olsen was called in 1923. Perhaps church leaders recalled Olsen's prior promotion of the Battle Creek Sanitarium correspondence school. Perhaps this decision was based in part on Olsen's commitment to sound scholarship. It could also be that the position was available at an opportune moment in Olsen's career and that the influence of J. L. Shaw was a significant factor.

At any rate, Olsen soon arrived in Washington and proceeded to vigorously engage in his work at Fireside. By the end of his term of service, Olsen would build the correspondence school into an elementary-through-college institution that served the entire world field.

During that first year at Fireside, Olsen carried out a general overhaul of courses so that the Adventist boarding colleges could give full credit to the correspondence work. He also began an intensive promotion of Fireside. In a 1930 report to the General Conference, he would note that the number of students enrolled had climbed from 559 in 1923 to 2,711 students representing more than 50 countries. Olsen would emphasize that the purpose of the correspondence school was to do extension work for all the Adventist colleges. He concluded his presentation by stating that "the Advent movement is essentially educational."[39]

In a front-page article in *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Olsen warned that only half of the young people of the Adventist Church were attending denominational schools. The others, he lamented, were attending institutions rampant with atheism. He then observed that correspondence education was becoming increasingly popular and invited the youth to enroll in Fireside. Before closing, however, he entered a disclaimer: "The first choice for our young people should be the resident school."[40] If that was impossible, however, the correspondence school was available.

By the end of 1927, Olsen observed that Fireside was the largest school in the denomination in terms of enrollment.[41] In 1930, the Fireside board voted to seek recognition by the National Home Study Council,[42] and on September 24, at Olsen's suggestion, a new name, Home Study Institute (HSI), was adopted.[43] HSI was proclaimed to be the extension division of Adventist colleges and academies. Up to half of all college work could now be taken through HSI, and the credits would be accepted at the church's resident colleges.

By 1931, however, the effects of the Great Depression were being felt, and

enrollments at HSI were plummeting. Not to be outdone by circumstances, Olsen began to promote a sales-manship course, which he predicted would keep its students out of the bread lines. In this same year, HSI established a branch in China and voted to seek accreditation with the National University Extension Association.

A report to the General Conference of 1936 noted that HSI had enrolled more than 28,000 students since its inception. Three branches of the Institute—in the Orient, Australia, and southern Europe—were in operation.[44] A shocking telegram was received, however, from W. A. Scharffenberg in September 1937 that gave notice that the branch of the HSI located in Shanghai, China, had been ransacked, and all was a total loss. This disaster, nevertheless, would be offset as a new branch was soon approved for southern Asia.

The Journal of True Education, whose idea Olsen had heartily endorsed in 1910, finally began publication in 1939. The first issue carried an article "Christian Education With the Help of the Postman," written by M. E. Olsen.[45] Throughout the next few years, Olsen would write various articles for the *Journal,* in which he would delineate his philosophy of education.

Olsen would advocate, for example, that teacher and pupils should embark together on "a voyage of discovery." They should go beyond the facts of persons and events to the deeper motives and meanings. The principles should not be fully explained but only hinted at, thus leaving the students to form their own conclusions. Teachers were to strive to develop in their students' patterns of conduct to serve as guideposts throughout life. To do this, they should first put themselves in the place of each student.[46]

Relationships of HSI with the other Adventist colleges, nevertheless, were not without ripples. In 1942, for example, a refund had to be given to George Vandeman "at the request of EMC [Emmanuel Missionary College in Berrien Springs, Michigan] that he give his whole attention to the courses he is taking at the college."[47] At this time, it

Quotations From M. E. Olsen

"Adventism, rightly apprehended, is essentially a spirit, an attitude of mind, rather than a set of opinions" ("The Spirit and Aim of Adventism," *Signs of the Times* 50:44 [November 6, 1923]: 13).

"Aim to prevent. . . ; you are never sure of curing. . . " ("On Saving the Boys," *Good Health* 5:5 [October 1906]: 136).

"All worthwhile study is the outgrowth of prayer" ("Among the Churches," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 108:18 [April 30, 1931]: 12).

"An ounce of actual achievement is worth many tons of good intentions" ("Sawing Wood," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 106:8 [February 21, 1929]: 17).

"Before one can be a safe leader, one must have been a faithful follower" ("The Importance of Being Somebody," *The Youth's Instructor* 82:39 [September 25, 1934]: 12).

"Example is everything; precept unenforced by example is nothing" ("On Saving the Boys," *Good Health* 5:5 [October 1906]: 136).

"Fix the whole mind on the real object in life—the glory of God and the good of one's fellow-men—and live to this one great purpose" ("Living to a Purpose," *Good Health* 1:2 [December 1901]: 20).

"Happiness is not what we have or do, but what we are" (*The Carpenter of Nazareth* [Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1947], 54).

"It is not numbers that count in the work of the Lord" ("Items From the Summer School," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 74:31 [August 3, 1897]: 487).

"It is not what we hope to accomplish tomorrow or the next day, but what we actually do in the present fleeting moment, that counts in our lives" (*The Carpenter of Nazareth* [Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1947], 123).

"Our colleges must be great missionary and evangelistic centers" ("Response From Professor M. E. Olsen," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 107:52 [October 9, 1930]: 14).

"Prayer is quite as important as work" ("Suggestions to Missionary Workers," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 75:10 [March 8, 1898]: 150).

"Serious books fit one for serious living" (*Much-Loved Books* [Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1952], 154).

"Some of us… are not so much living as *going to live*" ("Is It Possible?" *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 105:41 [October 11, 1928]: 14).

"Sound foundations are as important in education as in the building trade" (*A History of the Origin and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists* [Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1925], 82).

"The Advent movement is essentially educational" ("Fireside Correspondence School," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 107:30 [June 8, 1930]: 138).

"The education of our children and youth is by far the most sacred trust God has committed to us" ("Response From Prof. M. E. Olsen," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 96:16 [April 17, 1919]: 14).

"The literary study of the Bible is not the study of form apart from content" (*Much-Loved Books* [Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1952], 25).

"There are two things of outstanding importance in this life: To train for soulwinning, and to do soulwinning" ("The Duty to Put Oneself Under Training," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 106:15 [April 11, 1929]: 16).

"We cannot teach others unless we are students ourselves" ("A New Kind of Church School," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 110:33 [August 17, 1933]: 20).

"We must be in order to be able to do" (*The Carpenter of Nazareth* [Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1947], 54).

was also considered whether HSI should perhaps become an extension department of one of the colleges. By 1945, this choice was narrowed to Washington Missionary College, and Olsen formed part a committee established to study the proposed plan.

The Later Years (1946-1952)

In 1946, at the age of 73, Olsen requested retirement, having served for nearly 23 years as leader of the correspondence school. After his retirement, Olsen devoted much of his time to writing. One of his first projects was to adapt his dissertation on the King James Bible for publication and promotion by the Adventist Ministerial Association. A recent version of the New Testament, the Revised Standard, had appeared earlier that year and was being promoted as a replacement of the older King James Version. Olsen, however, did not share the popular enthusiasm and stated, "It is hardly likely to replace that much-loved classic."[48] He noted, nevertheless, that the Revised Standard Version did give evidence of fine scholarship. Tongue-in-cheek, he also praised it "for preserving intact for us so many fine passages from the King James version."[49] The overall purpose for the book, however, was broader and endeavored to trace the history of the translations of the English Bible from their beginnings.

Olsen's last major writing project, completed but a few weeks before his death, culminated in the publication of *Much-loved Books*. In this final work, Olsen summed up his philosophy: "Life should be lived joyously."[50] Well-chosen books would contribute greatly to this joy of living. While Olsen did not believe that the Bible was the only necessary book, he did exalt the Scriptures as the greatest of all literature—the great world drama. He noted, however, that the Bible was more than simply great literature; it had the power to transform the life.

Olsen then proceeded to examine the value of literary works by Luther, Wordsworth, Thoreau, Charles Lamb, Whittier, and others. He also ded-icated a chapter to James and Ellen White in which he wrote: "I feel that my life has been enriched, not only by personal contacts with Ellen G. White, but also by making myself familiar with her writings. It is my firm belief that a thoughtful reading of her books will deepen one's Christian experience and fit him to give more efficient service to the Master."[51]

In 1952, the pages closed on Olsen's life. It was a life well lived as health promoter, church historian, prolific writer, college administrator, and pioneer in Adventist education. ✍

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2. M. E. Olsen, *Much-Loved Books* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1952), 55.

3. Ibid., 57.

4. Camp meetings were a new idea for the continent, and although quite a number attended the meetings, there were but two family tents—one for Mrs. White and her secretaries, and one for the Olsens.

5. M. E. Olsen, "Recollections of Prof. G. H. Bell," *The Youth Instructor* 68:20 (May 18, 1920): 4.

6. Ibid., 5.

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23. M. E. Olsen to W. C. White, December 19, 1912. Ellen G. White Research Center.

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Opportunities for Education

in Times of Pandemic and Post-pandemic

To address the challenges and problems faced by our educational institutions in pandemic and post-pandemic times, we as Seventh-day Adventist educators will have to regularly reinvent ourselves. To remain relevant in a society that is constantly transforming, we will need to update our knowledge, pursue professional development, learn new skills, and be creative. These behaviors will be essential to being relevant in the "new normal."

In this increasingly digital society, rife with social, political, economic, and cultural instabilities, education acquires greater relevance because of its emphasis on nurturing and developing citizens who are committed to the wellbeing of others and the improvement of society. Specifically, this requires an education that, as Ellen White[1] wrote, encompasses the whole human being throughout his or her entire period of existence, and ensures the harmonious development of physical, intellectual, spiritual, and social faculties.

Thus, Adventist educators must intentionally pursue opportunities for continuous education to learn how best to meet the needs of students and the requirements of various governing bodies (e.g., governments and accrediting agencies). Educators must be willing to reinvent themselves as they serve in rapidly changing societies. About the times in which she lived, Ellen White wrote that "the opportuni-

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ties for coming in contact with men and women of all classes and of many nationalities, are much greater than in the days of Israel."[2] And, more so today, even with quarantine and social distancing, we have an array of opportunities due to advances in digital communication and technology.

Societies Facing Critical Conditions

Seismic social changes typically occur after major events such as wars, economic crises, technological advances, and plagues, also known as accelerators of the future or of history.[3] At the beginning of the 21st century, economists declared that society had entered the Fourth Industrial Revolution (or Industry 4.0),[4] and hypothesized that digital transformation would be the primary cause of change,[5] but its impact on society had not yet been felt in a significant way.

In the social sciences, the concept of Education 4.0 appeared. Its focus centered on the use of information and communication technologies (ICT)—defined as "all devices, networking components, applications and systems that combined allow people and organizations (i.e., businesses, nonprofit agencies, governments and criminal enterprises) to interact in the digital world"[6]—to develop competencies that serve Industry 4.0.[7] However, many were skeptical that, in the short term, this concept would become dominant in society.

However, since March 11, 2020, when the World Health Organization (WHO) recognized the emergence of a significant accelerator of history, now known as the COVID-19 pandemic,[8] societies worldwide have been undergoing significant changes that are putting the infrastructure of governments, institutions, and companies to the test. Social behaviors have been defined by isolation and social distancing.[9] Commercial interchange has suffered a slowdown in its different modalities, paralyzing the production of goods and services, and consequently economic growth.[10] In 2020, the International Monetary Fund

(IMF) predicted a drastic contraction of the world economy by 5.2 percent for 2020, which would have made it the worst recession since World War II.[11] However, the greatest impact has been the loss of lives, mainly of older adults and those with chronic diseases and pre-existing conditions,[12] though an increase in the number of deaths in young people has recently been observed.[13]

> The prolonged closure of educational institutions will continue to cause not only short-term learning losses, but also future difficulties related to the formation of human capital. During the onset of the pandemic, many students were unable to continue their education, and many experienced the loss of professional, employment, and economic opportunities.

For these reasons, we hear phrases such as: "Life after the pandemic will be different" or "the world will not be as it was before," which reflect the impact that COVID-19 has had on societies worldwide.[14] Definitely, the world is not, nor will it be, the same; and we are not referring only to health problems due to the pandemic, but also to the crises generated in the social, emotional, political, financial,

and educational spheres.[15] Writing about the time in which she lived, Ellen White said, "The present is a time of overwhelming interest to all living. Rulers and statesmen, men who occupy positions of trust and authority, thinking men and women of all classes, have their attention fixed upon the events taking place about us,"[16] and the same can be said of the time in which we now live.

Education Confronted With New Realities

The impact upon and crises generated in education have been substantial because to prevent the spread of contagion, educational institutions largely suspended their in-person activities. Initially, education was practically paralyzed, because most students were not able to attend school in person[17]; however, despite this challenge, many schools were able to reorganize using a variety of digital platforms, and utilizing strategies such as delivering learning packets to homes or tutoring students by telephone. Yet, despite these interventions, the prolonged closure of educational institutions will continue to cause not only short-term learning losses,[18] but also future difficulties related to the formation of human capital. During the onset of the pandemic, many students were unable to continue their education, and many experienced the loss of professional, employment, and economic opportunities.[19]

The global network of schools and institutions supported by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which follow the mission established by the Creator and seek to achieve academic excellence, faced the same challenges and experienced similar negative impacts. Administrators and teachers sought to implement a variety of actions to overcome the impact of this crisis, maintain quality standards, and thus continue to be relevant in their environment.

Although the pandemic has forced society and education to adapt to numerous challenges, the most impor-

tant thing is to take advantage of the opportunities presented in these new scenarios. Ellen White's counsel to teachers applies to all educators: "If you are called to be a teacher, you are called to be a learner also. If you take upon yourself the sacred responsibility of teaching others, you take upon yourself the duty of becoming master of every subject you seek to teach."[20] Regardless of the challenges, whether in classroom teaching or administration, educators must pursue opportunities to expand their knowledge base for the betterment of the students they serve.

Yet, the challenges are real. Among the most relevant ones faced by educators around the world, including those in Adventist educational institutions, are these:

• *Access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the Internet.* In 2020, worldwide, approximately 3.18 billion people did not have access to the Internet, which is equivalent to 41 percent of the world's population.[21] In addition, many educational institutions, tasked with developing students' digital skills, do not have an adequate technological infrastructure.[22] Learning inequalities in educational institutions have tended to worsen during the pandemic.

• *Use of information and communication technologies in the educational process.* Due to the pandemic, some educational institutions were forced to change to an emergency mode for which they were unprepared, described by Hallgarten[23] as "online face-to-face teaching." This modality does not resemble the previously defined modalities within virtual education, because conceptually, the same in-person teaching strategy is applied, but in the virtual mode. Many educators were not provided with the training or technology tools they needed to adapt to the emergency situation and had to rely on using methods that were far from ICT best practices for true distance education.[24]

• *Meaningful learning in virtual environments.* Even for those who had the opportunity to access virtual-learning environments (VLE), the adaptation process necessary to attain meaningful learning was not implemented in a consistent way. Although intrinsically motivated or technically and emotionally skilled students found that they could learn in these environments, vulnerable groups struggled to learn independently. The latter will probably need reinforcement of knowledge and skills when face-to-face learning resumes.

• *Screen time concerns*. Experts have expressed concerns about young children's increasing screen time. According to Poole-Boykin, quoted by García-Bullé,[25] screen time should be one to two hours a day for elementary students, two to three hours for high school students, and three to four hours for college students. The "overtime on the screen"—which includes time spent on entertainment and non-school-related viewing—will have a significant impact[26] on students, especially if a good portion of those hours are spent on effective learning and homework.

• *Increase of infoxication (e.g., information overload*). Due to the increased use of the Internet and social media, the crisis has aggravated the likelihood of information overload, called infoxication.[27] When this occurs, people have trouble adequately processing or understanding the deluge of information they encounter in their daily lives.

Finding Opportunities During the Pandemic and Post-Pandemic

In general, crises are the best times to look for opportunities. In the field of education, it is possible to find several of them related to the pandemic. In the next section, we will list some ways to use the lessons learned to improve teaching success.

Strengthening of Affective Relationships

Although virtual environments make it difficult for participants to interpret non-verbal aspects of communication such as gestures, facial expressions, body posture, eye contact, etc.,[28] several studies show that

ICTs can facilitate the establishment and strengthening of relationships in a variety of social environments (home, work, and school).[29]

Because the pandemic has expanded the opportunity to implement a variety of types of effective communication in virtual environments, educational institutions, as well as individual teachers, can establish much stronger relationships with those directly interested and engaged in the educational experience.[30] For example, during the height of the pandemic when students and parents were quarantined and had more time at home, there were opportunities for teachers to develop personalized virtual tutoring sessions, conduct virtual wellness checks, and pray together with the family unit.

Development of Creative Initiatives for Teaching

In the new online face-to-face modality using resources such as Zoom or Google Classroom or some of the many other virtual platforms,[31] it is possible to implement innovative teaching and learning strategies[32] or to creatively explore already-known methodologies, such as inverted or flipped classroom; project-based learning or integrated tasks; cooperative learning; gamification; problem-based learning; competency-based learning; design thinking; and thinking-based learning.[33]

Digital and Information Literacy

Technology has proved to be a useful and relevant tool in the current crisis, and for this reason, companies and educational institutions are strategically embarking on the process of digital transformation.[34]

These changes need to focus on developing and enhancing digital and information literacy skills. Information literacy is the ability to systematize relevant data to solve problems or make decisions.[35] This extends beyond the use of computer tools or programs; it encompasses areas ranging from knowing how to use a social network to sharing and storing documents in the cloud (cloud computing).[36]

Rethinking the Education Model and Updating the Curriculum

The "online face-to-face" modality challenges the traditional model and has created new scenarios that fundamentally change the educational process; this can give students greater autonomy and independence and can allow them to take charge of their own learning.[37] However, for this to occur, educators must be intentional

> In the formal and informal curriculum, students must have opportunities to engage through service, community engagement with local cultural or religious organizations, and connecting with peers in other parts of the world in diverse virtual classrooms.

about planning and implementing strategies that will enable students to build these skills.

Therefore, the traditional face-to-face education model of meeting specific schedules and completing tasks can be adapted by implementing new modalities such as the semi-presential modality (partly virtual, partly in-person), also known as hybrid modes of learning.[38] However, it is important to recognize that, due to personal, family, or cultural factors, many students will find it difficult to engage in self-motivated learning and to adapt or respond to change. Additionally, due to changes in society, educational institutions must update curriculum models to meet the demands of the "new normal," such as implementing a competency-based curriculum using interactive methods of instruction.

Integration of International and Intercultural Concepts Through "Internationalization at Home"

Educators have become more aware of the global nature of the teaching-learning process, which can generate opportunities to strengthen students' knowledge of global and local factors that affect their life experiences. Conceptually, this process consists of the intentional integration of international and intercultural concepts into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within institutional learning settings.[39] In the formal and informal curriculum, students must have opportunities to engage through service, community engagement with local cultural or religious organizations, and connecting with peers in other parts of the world in diverse virtual classrooms.

Through the use of ICTs and keeping in mind that Adventist education is a worldwide network linked to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it is possible to make use of the possibilities of internationalization by scheduling academic, social, cultural, and spiritual events among the institutions of the different countries. Educators must have opportunities for ongoing training on how to integrate these types of experiences into the virtual classroom.

Lifelong Learning: The Best Approach to Finding New Opportunities

After the pandemic, in the "new normal," education will continue to face unprecedented challenges.[40] Educators in this new normal can either continue as before or build roads for constant renewal. The most comfortable option would be to reinstate the same model and traditional ped-

agogies. However, considering the uncertainties in the new normal,[41] the best way forward is renewal, through a cycle of learning, unlearning, and relearning. Through lifelong learning, educators can develop a vision that will enable them to provide solutions to the new problems that will arise.

In the end, it is up to each educator, using the tools available, to decide to constantly renew himself or herself, and play a relevant role in this pandemic and in the post-pandemic; it is also up to administrators to ensure that opportunities for renewal are available, and employing organizations to require continued professional growth. It is up to each one to take responsibility for improving his or her knowledge, skills, and competences. We need to learn to visualize and prioritize the opportunities above the difficulties, to prepare for and adapt to the changes resulting from and implemented by the new normal. The future belongs to those who are humble and willing to keep learning throughout life. And while we are in this world, we can move forward with the assurance that God is in control of history, and by His grace, we will be victorious because He tells us, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10, ESV).[42]

The future belongs to those who seek to be permanently renewed in a harmonious way in their spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional life because "True education means more than pursuing a certain course of study. It has to do with the whole person, and with the whole period of existence possible to human beings."[43] "A crisis is right upon us. We must now by the Holy Spirit's power proclaim the great truths for these last days. . . . God is the great Master Worker, and by His providence, He prepares the way for His work to be accomplished. He provides opportunities, opens up lines of influence, and
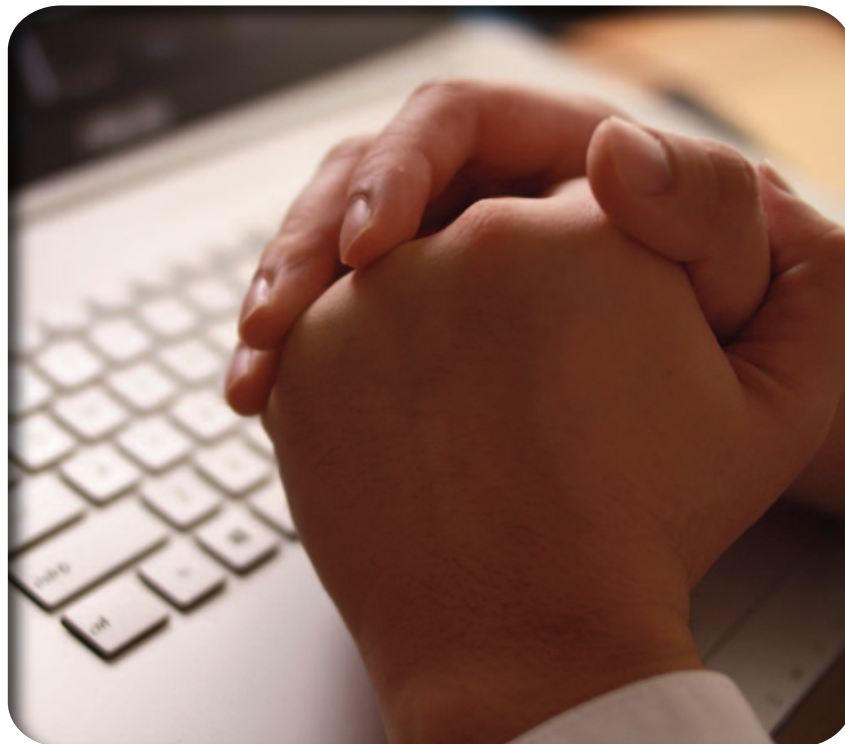
channels of working. If His people are watching the indications of His providence, and stand ready to co-operate with Him, they will see a great work accomplished."[44] When pointing to the Infinite Being, the Scriptures present in the following words the source of such education: In Him "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3); "he has counsel and understanding" (Job 12:13).

Christ soon will come, and we will be able to learn eternally with the true Master in the Eternal School, where "every power will be developed, every capability increased. The grandest enterprises will be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations will be reached, the highest ambitions realized. And still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of body and mind and soul."[45] Adventist education, at various academic levels, and through its educational projects, must promote this type of development. ✐

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Trisha Higgins-Handy

Reflections of an Adventist Teacher

A Personal and Professional Worldview Synthesis

As a Seventh-day Adventist educator teaching in an Adventist school, my worldview has significant implications for my practice. I am a Christian theist.[1] The framework for the development of my Christian theistic worldview can be traced back to my early childhood years. My first introduction to Jesus was through my loving parents. I remember a home that was filled with love, acceptance, and safety. I have fond memories of Sabbath school, church, and family worship. I received further exposure to God during my formative years of school. From Grade 1 through the end of high school, I was privileged to attend Adventist schools. This was a commitment my parents had made to our family. My worldview continued to develop even after I became a baptized member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church when I was 12 years old.

As I continued my personal Christian journey, the transition between home and school was somehow seamless as I experienced the overarching theme of God's love as ever-present. I made the choice to attend an Adventist university after finishing high school. It was during my years away from home, outside of the protection of my parents and church family, that I began to fully interact with and learn about other systems of beliefs and ways of life. I have never strayed too far; my personal journey with God remains and my faith continues to deepen. Through relationships with others, I have been challenged to think about what I accept as truth and my choice to be a Christian theist. I believe that it is the relationships I have had and continue to maintain that have helped to shape my current worldview.

Rationale for My Chosen Worldview

My Christian theistic worldview is rooted in the strong foundation of my first teachers: my mother and father. I believe that they took the responsibility of parenting as paramount and the advice of Proverbs 22:6 to heart as they did their best to demonstrate love to each other, their children, and others. I also had the blessing of having a close relationship with both my maternal and paternal grandparents into my adult life. All four grandparents were traditional, conservative Adventists who lived simple, joy-filled lives until the day they died. Two were centenarians—more than 100 years old! Through the lives of my parents and their parents before them, I have learned about the gift of salvation (John 3:16), the forgiveness of sin (1 John 1:9), and the endless love and grace of God (John 1:14; Romans 5:8).

My relationships with my parents and grandparents have been my tangible examples of who God is and the hope for the future that a life in service to Him can give. Seeing the importance of God in the lives of my parents and other family members was my firsthand experience with Him as well as a persistent invitation to developing a personal relationship with Him. One of my favorite inspirational Bible passages, Jeremiah 29:11 to 13, states: "'For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future/ Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart'" (NIV).[2] This Scripture passage provides me with a compass to navigate in a confusing and chaotic world.

Strengths and Challenges of Chosen Worldview

One of the biggest strengths of the Christian theistic perspective is the belief that God desires to have a personal and intimate relationship with His creation and promises in the plan of salvation an eternity spent with Him (as described in John 3:16, 17; Romans 5:8; and John 1:12). God's invitation, open and available to all, allows everyone equal opportunity to a saving relationship with Him (Ephesians 2:8, 9). The Bible, God's Word, gives humanity guidelines by which all should live, specifically in relation to Him and to others (Exodus 20:1-17; 2 Samuel 7:28).

Another positive aspect of Christian theism is the assurance of the presence and the power of God. In Genesis 1:1, the first line of the first book of the Bible speaks of God's existence and His awesome creative abilities.[3] Recognition of God as the Source of all life gives my life, as a creature made in His image, importance and meaning (Genesis 1:26). God was purposeful in His design and creation of me, a sign that He desires a personal connection with me (Psalm 139:13-16, Luke 12:7, Ephesians 2:10).

Some of the alleged weaknesses of Christian theism are actually criticisms directed at the church. Many individuals perceive the church as a dull, boring, out-of-date, dreary, muddled, misguided sort of place.[4] Although this is sometimes a reality, we should remember that humans are flawed, fallen creatures. The church, the body of Christ, should be a place that provides believers a sense of community and belonging. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), but being bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20), all can be saved. As a community of believers, Christian theists are called to worship God, encourage others, and continually seek a deeper relationship with Jesus.

Development and Strengthening of Worldview

I believe that teaching, my chosen profession, gives me many opportunities to strengthen and grow in my worldview as an Adventist teacher in an Adventist school. As a Christian educator, I can make the study of the Bible a priority and daily be reminded of God's promises and endless love. Spending dedicated time in prayer and communication with God allows me to not only share with Him the burdens or joys of my heart, but also learn to listen to His voice patiently and silently. This period of time that the world paused due to COVID-19 restrictions has provided yet another chance for me to develop a more personal relationship with God.

Jesus' words found in Matthew 22:37 to 39 provide me with great motivation, both personally and professionally: "'"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself."'" Striving daily to be more like Jesus will ultimately enable me to demonstrate His transformative power in my life to my family, my students, and my colleagues. Every day, I seek to recommit my life to God and dedicate myself to a life of loving service to others.

Implications for Education and Professional Life

As an educator, I believe that my role in the classroom has great influence on the students and families I serve. As a Christian, my approach to each student is based on the guidance of Ellen White in *Education* where she wrote: "Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do."[5] Viewing my students as God's creation implies that each one is a uniquely crafted masterpiece and must be treated with care and respect. This means that my calling as a teacher is to help provide all of my students with educational experiences that help them to not only acquire knowledge through various disciplines but also, and more importantly, to develop a character that leads toward restoration and redemption.[6]

This also means that I must be well qualified scholastically and seek to grow continually in my development as a Christian professional. As I work to promote excellence in my students, I must also embrace the goal of self-improvement.[7] The task of a Christian teacher is one of great responsibility! It calls me to be deliberate and intentional in all I say and do so that I constantly point students to God. This re-

> Spending dedicated time in prayer and communication with God allows me to not only share with Him the burdens or joys of my heart, but also learn to listen to His voice patiently and silently.

quires that my life reflect the model set by Christ's life, and that my obedience to Him and His Word is constantly evident in how I live (1 John 2:3-6).

Ellen G. White's *Education* has much to say about the Christian teacher and classroom. As an ambassador for Christ, my primary focus is not just on teaching and imparting information to students. I desire "to inspire them with principles of truth, obedience, honor, and integrity, and purity—that makes then a positive force for the stability and uplifting of society."[8] Of teachers, White also said, "Love and tenderness, patience and self-control, will at all times be the law of their speech."[9] Because children are attracted to a cheerful and sunny demeanor, in my classroom, I endeavor to show them kindness and courtesy that models how they should treat one another.[10]

Some of my other professional responsibilities are providing opportunities for my students to assume leadership roles, maintaining a welcoming learning environment that will engage and challenge every student to think critically and creatively in learning activities, as well as making myself available to both students and parents to provide assistance and timely feedback on student progress.

Implications for Diversity

In 1 Corinthians 12:15 to 18, we find an analogy of the church to the various parts of the body. Just as each body part is different in form and function, but necessary to making the body complete; likewise, each student who becomes part of my class contributes to making our class whole (Galatians 3:28). This analogy can also be applied to the many families of the students served by the school and to the community at large. Diversity in the classroom takes many forms. Differences in language, culture, religious beliefs, interests, and abilities are all student qualities that are to be embraced and celebrated. Embracing diversity has been a beautiful experience for me. My students and I have learned so many new and interesting things from one another that help make our learning much more enjoyable.

In my classroom, teaching with diversity means that I encourage my students to be independent thinkers. This involves helping them to see the value of study through questioning, searching for answers, and engaging in conversations with others to gain understanding.[11] Using many forms of differentiated learning[12] and instruction is also another important way to embrace diversity in my classroom. Recognizing that each student is an individual with unique needs allows me to customize learning experiences to meet these needs and create more meaningful connec-tions between their lives and what we are learning in the classroom.

But most importantly, diversity in my classroom means showing all who enter my classroom the unconditional love of God. When Christ was here on earth, His ministry took Him to various places, and He mixed and mingled with many kinds of people. The Gospels are filled with stories that depict Him intentionally seeking out encounters with those who were ignored and dismissed by society—the ailing, women, and children (Matthew 8 and 9; John 4:1-26; and Mark 10:13-16). Jesus was deliberate in His interactions with others and always welcomed those who were considered unimportant, undeserving, or unlovable. The plan of salvation is not only for a select few, but available to anyone willing to accept God's gift (John 5:24). As a servant of God, it is my responsibility to embrace all those I am charged to care for and to strive to manifest God's love to all of His children.

Conclusion

As an Adventist educator, my personal and professional synthesis of worldview impacts my teaching practice. For this reason, I must intentionally engage in continuous reflection about what I believe and why, and above all, how it influences what I do. As I examine what I believe to be true about my personal worldview and profession, I strive to become more authentic and to have a greater impact on the lives of my students, their parents, my colleagues, and my community. ✎

This reflection has been peer reviewed.

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Ike C. de la Peña

Michael C. Pan

Learning During Stressful Situations

Optimizing Evidence-based Learning Strategies

The abrupt shift from traditional face-to-face modalities to alternative platforms of learning (such as online classes, self-guided modules, paper-based instruction, etc.), as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, has affected many educators and students worldwide.[1] Students, in particular, have struggled with issues relating to academics (adjustment to new learning modalities) and mental health (depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts).[2] Unsurprisingly, many have fallen behind in their learning.[3]

As the world enters various stages of recovery from COVID-19, students (and educators) are facing new challenges. Students may experience back-to-school anxiety and stress when visiting other places.[4] Furthermore, others may still grapple with grief and trauma from losing a loved one and/or recovering from a disability due to COVID-19 or from the long period of confinement due to pandemic lockdowns and social distancing.

How can teachers help students as they go back to school? What strategies can they use to help students catch up from the "learning loss" during the pandemic?[5] How can educators help students learn during stressful situations, in general?

Focusing on students' well-being is critical to help them learn and succeed amidst challenging learning situations.[6] Thus, teaching students stress- and anxiety-management techniques is as crucial as introducing effective ways for them to learn and to study. In this article, we first discuss strategies that educators can use to provide student support during stressful situations. Next, we describe evidence-based learning and teaching strategies that can be applied alongside or after implementing the stress-management techniques in order to promote student gains in learning despite stressful circumstances.

Optimizing Learning Through Stress Management

By keeping student stress at manageable or adaptive levels, educators can increase their students' readiness to learn. The following stress-management techniques can be introduced to students during their classes as special activities to promote well-being, or in remedial programs and applied during their free time. They may also be included as part of school-level psychosocial support services. And just as important, teachers can also use these strategies to manage their own stress, since their mental health can also affect student learning.[7]

Fostering Self-awareness

Stress reactions may result from various triggering factors. One important step in dealing with stress is to foster self-awareness.[8] To do this, teachers can help students learn how to explore and identify their physical, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive reactions when they feel stressed, and the circumstances from which these reactions emerge.[9] Students can also be asked to explore their own strengths in order to increase their awareness of the internal resources that they can use to effectively manage stress.[10]

A handy tool to promote self-awareness and the need for self-care is the acronym H.A.L.T., which stands for "*Am I **h**ungry? Am I **a**ngry? Am I **l**onely? Am I **t**ired?*"[11] If a student answers "Yes" to any or all of these questions, he or she is then encouraged to reflect on situations that trigger these reactions. The following

stress-management techniques can then be applied as needed, either before or as the stress emerges.

Managing Difficult Emotions

Negative thoughts like *"This coursework or assignment is too much for me to bear!"* may elicit negative feelings (such as hopelessness), which could be further intensified by stressful events. Reframing, or looking at a situation from a different perspective, is an emotion-regulation technique that can be used to manage negative thoughts and their outcomes, as well as difficult emotions.[12] Reframing can bring about healthier emotions and consequently, more adaptive behaviors.[13]

To implement reframing, ask students to first identify the negative thoughts underlying a negative emotion (for example, loneliness or worry). Next, ask them to reframe these thoughts, depending on their individual perspective (see Box 1). Finally, inquire deeper by asking students to reflect on how reframing helped change their previous feelings and behavior. When implementing this technique, teachers should note their students' responses, behaviors, or experiences in order to identify chronically stressed students[14] whose daily functioning has been severely disrupted by stress, as well as those who may become a threat to themselves or others. These individuals can then be referred for further assessment and interventions by qualified mental-health practitioners. However, deciding when and whom to refer may be more challenging on some occasions. Teachers may benefit from additional training on student mental health and the delivery of basic psychosocial support (see Box 2 on page 41).

Exercising Positive Emotions

This strategy revolves around actively nurturing positive emotions such as compassion and gratitude (Philippians 4:8). One way to practice compassion and lovingkindness is to visualize oneself and others (loved ones, friends, or even enemies) and repeatedly utter (either verbally or mentally) wishes of goodwill and love to the individual(s) one has in mind.[15] This could be done during breathing exercises, meditation, or at

Box 1. Reframing Negative Thoughts	
Negative Thoughts	**Reframed Thoughts**
"This class requirement is too hard for me. I'm going to fail this course."	"I know this is difficult, but if I do it one task at a time, it may be more manageable to accomplish." "This is not the first time I have ever been stressed with schoolwork. I know that this, too, shall pass." "I don't have to do this all by myself. I can ask my peers or my teacher for extra support."
"I am utterly helpless and worthless during this crisis."	"This situation is hard for everyone. I could try learning new skills, practice healthy habits, and maintain manageable routines to keep me going." "There's no shame in asking for help. I could try it sometimes."
"It is all my fault that I am in this dire situation."	"Some circumstances are beyond my control." "I shouldn't blame myself/I cannot take all the blame. I can learn lessons from this experience as I move forward."
"I will never recover from this (loss, failure)."	"People go through the recovery process in different ways. It could take time, but I can try to find helpful coping strategies along the way." "This difficult phase of my life can be a learning opportunity."
"These difficult emotions are overwhelming. I think I'm getting crazy."	"Yes, difficult emotions can be overbearing but it doesn't mean I'm crazy. These feelings are normal reactions to an abnormal situation." "It's natural to experience difficult emotions from time to time. Having difficult emotions doesn't have to stop me from attending to other aspects of my life that matter more." "I've had difficult emotions in the past; and like any other emotion, they just go away at some point."

There are several professional resources that can assist teachers in learning how to support students' mental health in the classroom. Whether through professional development offered by the local conference or union offices of education, local state or national education agencies, or through courses (in-person or online) offered by local colleges and universities, Adventist educators have several options to pursue more training in this area. Here are a few resources:

Adventist Learning Community (ALC)
https://www.adventistlearningcommunity.com/

ALC offers several self-paced courses on a variety of topics. For example, see Ways Teachers Can Prepare Themselves to Teach Amid COVID-19 and More at https://www.adventistlearningcommunity.com/courses/ways-teachers-can-prepare.

General Conference (GC) Health Ministries Youth Alive
https://youthaliveportal.org/mentalhealth

GC Health Ministries launched in 2020 the COVID-19 Mental Health Initiative. For video and downloadable resources available on the Youth Alive platform, visit https://youthaliveportal.org/mentalhealth?_ga=2.82765270.1946586977.1629306261-2076005842.162930626.

Well-being Information and Strategies for Educators (WISE)
https://mhttcnetwork.org/free-smh-course

The National Center for School Mental Health at the University of Maryland School of Medicine and the Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network (MHTTCN) have created a free self-paced online course for educators on how to promote well-being in students and identify and respond to mental health needs of children and adolescents.

Child Mind Institute
https://childmind.org/

A U.S.-based independent nonprofit, Child Mind Institute provides resources for children and families coping with mental-health challenges. The resource provides information on a variety of topics (https://childmind.org/topics-a-z/) and a portal to request school talks and educator workshops (https://childmind.org/our-impact/school-and-community/school-talks/).

any other time as determined by the individual. To exercise gratitude, one could simply reflect on the events of the day (for example, before going to sleep at night) and meditatively recollect the things for which he or she is thankful—extraordinary happenings or even simple things such as having good weather.[16] Other ways of expressing gratitude that are practiced in an individual's culture may also be incorporated into this exercise.

Teachers may also encourage the use of this technique when reaching out to students who are in emergency situations such as being stranded in temporary shelters (like evacuation or isolation facilities). Ultimately, the goal is to encourage reflection and positive thoughts and emotions.

Nurturing Spirituality

By nurturing spirituality, individuals can be provided with more wholistic psychosocial support, which is especially meaningful in times of crisis, calamities, or stressful life transitions. Spiritual interventions have been associated with positive psychosocial outcomes in students[17] and can be implemented at the school level to help students cope with challenging learning environments and various personal challenges. Learning institutions can provide students with spiritual-support programs and access to opportunities that will help them maintain a healthy spirituality while dealing with their struggles. Teachers and administrators can modify existing programs in the school or initiate spiritual-wellness activities applicable to the existing crisis. However, these activities must be carefully planned so that they consider and respect the varying spiritual orientations and religious traditions of each student. The stress-management techniques outlined above are merely complementary measures that educators can introduce and use in their classrooms and are not meant to replace formalized services that address students' serious mental-health issues. Schools without existing academic-support programs can initiate them, while those with support services already in place may need to streamline and more actively mobilize their programs to deal with current circumstances.

Teaching Evidence-based Learning Strategies

Effective, evidence-based learning strategies that are applicable in a variety of learning situations (in-person or online),[18] can also help students learn better during stressful times. They may also increase student engagement,[19] which will be useful for educators dealing with students returning to the classroom whose motivation and morale have been affected by the pandemic and lockdowns.

Retrieval Practice

Also called the "testing effect," retrieval practice is a cognitive strategy that involves recalling memorized information. The act of retrieval itself strengthens memory and facilitates deeper learning and long-term storage of information. Retrieval practice has been shown to enhance the learning of students of all ages, from preschool through college level.[20] Moreover, this technique has been shown to decrease cognitive load, enhance metacognition, and boost student confidence.[21] For students experiencing back-to-school anxiety and stress, retrieval practice is one of the best techniques teachers can introduce, given that this strategy also reduces test anxiety.[22]

Instead of the usual rewriting and highlighting of notes from the teacher's presentation or textbook, which is passive and time-consuming, students can be instructed to create flashcards from notes, complete practice tests, or create and answer their own practice quizzes. To use retrieval practice in engaging ways, teachers can employ the Socratic method of teaching (teaching by asking rather than by telling),[23] or online tools during their lectures, such as Kahoot!, Flipgrid, PollEverywhere, and Quizlets (see Box 3). To maximize the benefits of retrieval practice, teachers should instruct students to think of testing as a tool to enhance rather than monitor the status of their learning.[24] The above-mentioned online technologies should also be used as retrieval tools rather than competitive activities to better maximize student participation and reduce anxiety.

Spaced Practice

The benefits of retrieval practice can be augmented when used in tandem with spaced practice, another highly effective learning strategy. Spaced practice, which is the opposite of cramming, involves studying material in a distributed fashion (spreading it out over time) rather than in a single, long session.[25] Spacing

Box 3. Examples of Online Tools That Incorporate Evidence-based Learning Strategies*		
Online Tool	**Description**	**Reference**
Kahoot! https://kahoot.com	A game-based learning platform, where teachers can create quizzes accessible via a web browser or the Kahoot application.	Sherlock A. Licorish et al., "Students' Perception of Kahoot!'s Influence on Teaching and Learning," *Research and Practice in Technology Enhanced Learning* 13:9 (July 21, 2018): 1-23. doi.10.1186/s41039-018-0078-8.
Flipgrid https://flipgrid.com	This tool allows students to use 15-second to 5-minute videos to respond to prompts. Teachers provide feedback, and students respond to one another's videos.	Tyler M. Kiles, Julia Vishenchuk, and Kenneth Hohmeier, "Implementation of Flipgrid as a Self-reflection Tool for Student Engagement—A Pilot Study," *Innovations in Pharmacy* 11:4 (December 2, 2020): Article 15, 1-4. doi.10.24926/iip.v11i4.3340.
PollEverywhere https://pollev.com	Teachers create questions in various formats (multiple-choice, open-ended, etc.) to which students can respond in various ways. Students and teachers see the results in real time.	Eiman Abdel Meguid and Matthew Collins, "Students' Perceptions of Lecturing Approaches: Traditional Versus Interactive Learning," *Advances in Medical Education and Practice* 8 (March 17, 2017): 229-241. doi.10.2147/AMEP.S131851.
Quizlets https://quizlet.com	A great tool for students to create and use flashcards.	Arin Whitman, Kim Tanzer, and Eric Nemec 2nd, "Gamifying the Memorization of Brand/Generic Drug Names," *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning* 11:3 (2019): 287-291. doi.10.1016/j.cptl.2018.12.014.

* For other online tools and applications, refer to the following websites: https://www.nwea.org/blog/2019/75-digital-tools-apps-teachers-use-to-support-classroom-formative-assessment/; https://www.learningscientists.org/blog/2020/8/13-1.

promotes "a little bit of forgetting," which is actually helpful in encoding and long-term storage of information, since the process of retrieving or recalling stored information strengthens neural connections and helps to solidify what is learned.

For students who have just returned to the classroom after the pandemic, daily quizzes may further intensify their stress and anxiety. Educators can instead plan to space the use of practice quizzes and assessments to reduce student stress and effectively incorporate both spaced and retrieval practice. They can also train their students (especially young learners) to design personal study schedules that effectively use spaced practice. Moreover, starting a lecture with a brief review of previous materials and giving cumulative assessments are effective strategies to facilitate recall of materials learned during the past day, week, block, or semester. Assigning homework on previous topics can also ensure that already-acquired information remains fresh within the students' minds.

Interleaving

Stressed-out students may find it very hard to learn complex and difficult subjects, such as math and calculations. Interleaving, a learning strategy that entails presenting or studying materials in a mixed rather than blocked or sequential fashion, is a method that can help students deal with subjects that involve calculation or require problem-solving skills.[26] Interleaving trains the mind to decide which strategy to use to solve a particular problem and to identify similarities and differences between ideas and concepts.[27]

Teachers can use this technique by incorporating online tools such as applications (e.g., Quizlet, Quiz Champ, etc.) that provide built-in interleaving algorithms (see Box 3 on page 42). They can also personally teach their students how to use this strategy effectively (i.e., to mix different but related learning materials such as calculating volumes of different shapes, rather than unrelated ones such as math problems and vocabulary themes).[28] Teachers can also creatively devise instructional tools and help students design study methods and/or schedules that combine interleaving and the above-discussed learning strategies.

Dual Coding

Dual coding involves using words and pictures to teach or learn content.[29] This technique, however, does not involve evaluating one's learning style (e.g., auditory, visual, kinesthetic) and studying according to that "style," which does not really accelerate student learning.[30]

Teachers can use dual coding by combining texts and pictures/illustrations in their presentations/lectures. The use of infographics, diagrams, cartoon strips, and videos are attention-grabbing and engaging ways of using this technique. Students can use this approach to rewrite texts from books and create visuals that accompany the texts. They can also be instructed to re-create the visuals from memory and describe them using text, to integrate both dual coding and retrieval practice.

The above list is certainly not exhaustive, and decades of research have identified several other evidence-based teaching and learning strategies.[31] Note, however, that the effectiveness of the above-described learning strategies has been demonstrated in "normal" laboratory or classroom environments; and thus, studies are needed to establish their efficacy amidst stressful situations. During these challenging times, psychosocial support and stress-management skills may be introduced to optimize effectiveness and facilitate continued use of evidence-based learning strategies by students. In any case, teachers must inform learners that evidence-based learning strategies create "desirable difficulties" (i.e., considerable but desirable amount of effort), which underlie their beneficial outcomes.[32]

As Christian educators, it is our responsibility to train our students to become "thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other people's thoughts."[33] The use of evidence-based learning strategies can facilitate deeper processing of content and transform students into active learners who are more likely to succeed in their learning endeavors.

In conclusion, student learning is often affected by stressful conditions. Educators can play an important role in creating a supportive environment for students—one that employs evidence-based strategies and nurtures positive mental health to effectively maximize learning amidst difficult situations. ✒

This article has been peer reviewed.

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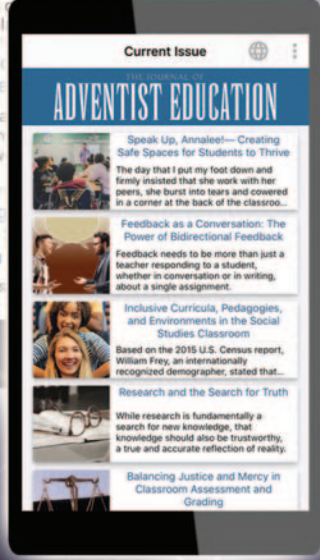
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Randall Herbert Hall

JAE Copy Editor and Proofreader

January 13, 1955 - July 16, 2021

It is with great sadness that we share the passing of Randall Herbert Hall, 66, who served as copy editor and proofreader for *The Journal of Adventist Education®* (JAE) for almost 35 years between 1981 and 2020. Mr. Hall earned an undergraduate degree in English and Communications from Columbia Union College, now Washington Adventist University, in Takoma Park, Maryland, U.S.A., and a Master's degree in Communication and Religion from Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. He was assigned to copy edit JAE in 1981 by the manager of University Printers, located on the campus of Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A., and continued to serve in this role for several years. In 1988, production for JAE was moved to Southwestern Color-Graphics in Keene, Texas, where copy editing was done in house for a couple of years by Dr. Lewis Larson.

When Howard Bullard joined the JAE team as its first professional layout designer/art director, and it became apparent that copy editing needed to be done locally, Beverly Robinson-Rumble, then Editor of JAE,

> "Then I heard a voice from heaven say, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."—Revelation 14:13, NIV.*

invited Mr. Hall, who was then working at the Columbia Union Conference office as a production assistant and later assistant editor of the *Columbia Union Visitor*, to reassume the responsibility. For nearly 30 more years, he continued in this role to perform with distinction and precision the tasks of copy editing and proofreading JAE. Toward the end of his tenure, he collaborated with his identical twin brother, Wayne Hall, in providing copy-editing services for JAE, and together they made an excellent and capable team.

More than just an outstanding copy editor and proofreader, Randy Hall was a good friend, a fine contract employee, and valued colleague. We will miss him.

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his excitement and anticipation (What will he do as he goes forward? What will be become?), there was a hint of wistfulness, a sense of nostalgia and what-if's (What if I had done this, that, or the other? How would my life have been different?). I'm certainly not doing what I had seen myself doing when I graduated from college—let alone when I graduated from 8th grade. And this is true for many individuals.

I could let myself get dejected by the fact that I'm not in any of the careers I had considered from 8th grade to college graduation; or that I haven't travelled the entire world—that I haven't done any number of things that I had thought I might one day do. But, while I might think about it occasionally, I have no re-grets.

1 Chronicles 16:12 says: "Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgements he pro-nounced."[3] That makes it easier. Maybe I'm not past the quarter-century mark teaching (I taught only two years before the school where I was teaching down-sized and life shuttled me in a different direction), but I found a job working in education, doing what I can to help other educators; it is a profession that I enjoy, with people that I like and with whom I appreciate working. Although I haven't traveled the entire world, I have seen more of it than most people, and working where I do, I'm exposed to people from all over; ex-periencing ideas and viewpoints that give me a larger picture of the world than I might have had.

I think despite the changes to my plans and future, there were numerous wonders and miracles performed . . . the biggest miracle being my 8th-grade-graduate son. So, maybe a large part of the future God has for me has already occurred (and maybe not—I plan to live a long time!), but if so, that's OK, because I can look back and see how He has blessed me and look forward to how He will bless me and my family in the future. Thirty-six years ago, God knew His plans; He still does. I'm looking forward to finding out what those are. My hope is that we all can look back with gratitude and look forward to the future with hope and trust.

In this issue, the authors address several topics that challenge us to reflect on the past so that we can move forward with hope in the future. In "Does Teaching About Evolution in Adventist Schools Destroy Faith in God?" Stanley D. Dobias and J. Russ Butler share re-sults from a course designed to help prepare students to be factually literate about a Seventh-day Adventist worldview regarding Creation, yet knowledgeable about and tolerant of opposing theories they will en-counter as they continue their education (page 4). In

"Motivating Students in the Religion Classroom," Timothy Alan Floyd discusses the need for implement-ing intentional approaches to motivate and nurture stu-dents in the religious-education classroom (page 12). And, in a feature section on Adventist pioneers, John Wesley Taylor V writes about Mahlon Ellsworth (M. E.) Olsen, an Adventist educator whose life and career path exemplify trust in God's promise for a "future and a hope" (page 19). Sócrates Quispe-Condori, Tito Goi-cochea-Malaver, and Edgard Leonel Luz ask educators to think about ways to modify instruction and access to education post-pandemic in "Opportunities for Edu-cation in Times of Pandemic and Post-pandemic" (page 28). In the *Perspectives* feature section, Trisha Higgins-Handy reflects on her worldview as an Adventist teacher, and its impact on her practice (page 35), and in *Best Practices at Work* section, Ike C. de la Peña and Michael C. Pan provide several examples of how to op-timize instruction post-pandemic in "Learning During Stressful Situations: Optimizing Evidence-based Learn-ing Strategies" (page 39).

We hope you enjoy this issue, and with each article, find inspiration and hope.

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