

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY
DIALOGUE

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**When faith and reason
are in tension**

**Good God, what have
we done to you?**

**A day of delight,
a day to remember**

**The attitude
of Jesus toward women**

Internet temptations

2

Volume 19

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CONTENTS

ESSAYS

5 When faith and reason are in tension

Understanding how faith and reason work, Christians can live in the tension without being apologetic of the former or enamored by the latter.
by L. James Gibson

9 Good God, what have we done to you?

The kind of God we serve determines the kind of life we live.
by Randall L. Roberts

12 A day of delight, a day to remember

Keeping the Sabbath is a statement we make to the universe—that we belong to God, our Creator and Redeemer.
by Dan Smith

14 The attitude of Jesus toward women

By His example, the Savior restored to women their status and dignity before God and started a quiet but lasting revolution.
by Miguel Ángel Núñez

DEPARTMENTS

EDITORIAL

3 Three certainties
by Humberto M. Rasi

4 TRANSITION

16 Birgit Philipsen
by Kimberly Luste Maran

18 Jordi Baget
by Roberto Badenas

LOGOS

20 Better vision in the body of Christ
by Lisa M. Beardsley

BOOKS

22 *Historical Dictionary of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Gary Land)
Reviewed by Nancy Vyhmeister

22 *Sea feliz: Cómo vencer la depresión y controlar la ansiedad* (Mario Pereyra y Carlos Mussi)
Reviewed by Nancy Carbonell

23 *Cristología: Descubriendo al Maestro* (Miguel Ángel Núñez)
Reviewed by Roberto Badenas

VIEWPOINT

24 Christians and homosexuality
by Chris Blake

ACTION REPORT

28 Where hope happens
by Dick Duerksen

OPEN FORUM

29 Drink a little wine?
by Aecio Cairus

FIRST PERSON

30 God's wonderful providence
by Alberto Soriano

CAMPUS LIFE

31 Sharing your faith with a Jewish friend
by Mark A. Kellner

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

34 Overcoming the Internet temptations

ET CETERA

INSERT

Paintings by Jordi Baget

EDITORIAL

Three certainties

“Gazing up at the stars, for the first time, the first, I laid my heart open to the benign indifference of the universe.” With these somber words, the Nobel laureate Albert Camus closed his first novel, *The Stranger*, the gripping story about an alienated man convicted of murder and awaiting execution.

Almost fifty years after Camus’ premature death, many around us share this view. But is it true? Is the universe indifferent to what happens to us? Or even worse, do we inhabit a hostile and perhaps cruel cosmos?

To phrase it differently, Is there a God in our vast universe that cares about each of us individually? From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible’s clear answer is *Yes!*

As I write my final editorial for *Dialogue*, I want to highlight three powerful certainties from God’s Word that have encouraged me through the years and continue to strengthen my faith each new day:

- “I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11, LB). Speaking to His people through His gentle prophet at a time of national crisis, God offers words of inspiration and assurance. Remember this promise whenever you struggle with disappointments and difficulties. *Trust* in Him.

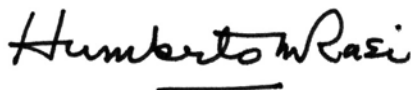
- “I am sure that God who began the good work within you will keep right on helping you grow in his grace until his task within you is finally finished on that day when Jesus Christ returns” (Philippians 1:6, LB). Once we accept God as Lord of our life, He starts molding our character and prepares us for a unique mission that is in synch with our natural talents. Let Him *transform* you.

- “I am the Good Shepherd.... My sheep recognize my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. No one shall snatch them away from me” (John 10:14, 27, 28, LB). Jesus Christ, the Creator and Sustainer of the cosmos, came to this world to open the way to salvation for each human being that accepts His grace. When we entrust our life to Him, He becomes our faithful guide, one who will never abandon us. *Believe* it.

Almost 20 years ago—when we launched *Dialogue* as an international journal for Adventist college/university students and young professionals—our first editorial stated our purpose: To help our readers know, live, and better share their Christian faith. Your messages sent from scores of countries around the world have brought us the assurance that we are reaching our goals and that our efforts have been appreciated.

As I pass on the chief editorial responsibilities of *College and University Dialogue* to Dr. Lisa Beardsley and bid each of you a fond farewell, I pray that you will treasure these three biblical promises and that your faith, knowledge, and service will grow daily under God’s blessing.

Until we meet again!



Humberto M. Rasi
Editor-in-Chief

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

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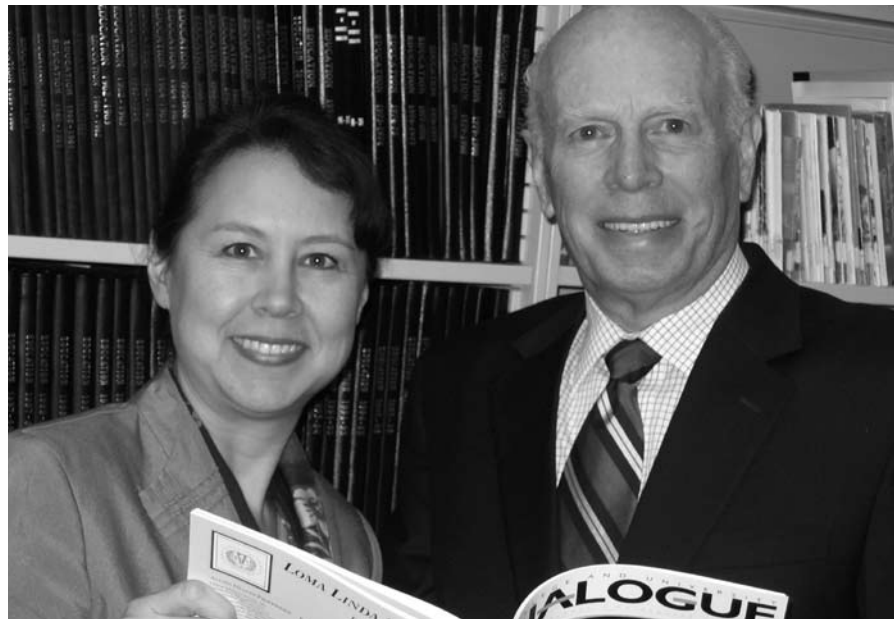
DIALOGUE has received correspondence from readers in 118 countries around the world.

TRANSITION

Farewell and welcome!

When *Dialogue* made its first appearance in 1989, it was a journey of faith, undertaken with the vision of one man—Humberto Rasi, then associate education director of the General Conference—who fostered, nurtured, and developed it into a full, mature journal of academic conversation, faith affirmation, and joyful service to humanity. Even though Dr. Rasi retired from his official position as director of the department at the General Conference in 2002, he continued to care for the editorial production of the journal until this issue. Through this long journey, Dr. Rasi was responsible for publishing 55 issues in four parallel language editions. During his tenure, nearly 1.75 million copies in four languages were distributed in 118 countries. The journal—published in English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese—carried in its first issue a three-pronged vision statement: “to know your faith;” “to live your faith;” and “to share your faith.” *Dialogue* has remained faithful to that vision.

With this issue, we bid farewell



to Dr. Rasi and thank him for his singular contribution to the world of Adventist education and journalism. His place as chief editor is being filled by Dr. Lisa Beardsley, associate director of education at the General Conference. She comes to her position with full academic credentials (B.Th.; M.P.H.; Ph.D. in educational psychology; and M.B.A.), 27 years of profes-

sional service beginning as an elementary school teacher to most recently serving as vice chancellor for academic affairs of Loma Linda University, and a wide range of writing and editorial experience. Under her stewardship, the journal has only one place to go—up! We welcome Dr. Beardsley to the post of chief editor. Let dialogue continue.

—John M. Fowler, Editor



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The tuition charge covers 4 units of tuition plus the textbook, *Faith, Reason and Earth History*, by Leonard Brand. Scholarships are available, primarily for students outside of North America, to cover much of the usual LLU tuition charge. For further information on the course and the available scholarships contact Dr. Brand at lbrand@llu.edu.

When faith and reason are in tension

by L. James Gibson

Understanding how faith and reason work, Christians can live in the tension without being apologetic of the former or enamored by the latter.

Experience and revelation are different ways by which Christians obtain knowledge. Experience leads to knowledge through reason, in a process of discovery. We tend to accept reason as true when we can confirm it through additional experience. Revelation, on the other hand, may provide knowledge beyond our ability to discover, and concerning propositions beyond our experience. We may not always be able to test revealed propositions by experience. Instead, our evaluation of revelation depends on our assessment of the reliability of the source of the revelation. This assessment is an application of reason, showing that reason is indispensable even for receiving revelation. Acceptance of revelation as truth is based on confidence in the Revealer, a condition called faith. The Christian regards both reason and revelation as gifts of God.

Since both reason¹ and revelation have their ultimate source in God, they should be in complete harmony. Yet reason and revelation appear to conflict when attempting to explain the world around us. This article will discuss some of the factors contributing to the conflict between science and faith and suggest ways in which Christians might choose to deal with it.

Why do faith and science at times clash?

At least two factors contribute to a potential clash between faith and science. First, lack of information. If we had all knowledge about both revelation and reason, we could see where

the truth actually lies. But we don't, and therefore, conflict becomes possible. Furthermore, some of what we consider knowledge is false. Sincere Christians frequently disagree over some point of revelation, not because of differences in revelation but because of differences in interpreting the revelation. Likewise, scientists disagree over how to interpret data, and the history of scientific revolutions reminds us that consensus is no protection against future re-interpretation.²

Second, human pride. Pride may manifest itself in a variety of ways. Pride of opinion is one such. Once having taken a position, it is difficult to admit we were wrong and change our view, especially if the process is public. Both scientists and Bible students may find it difficult to retract their stated beliefs. Pride in our own self-sufficiency may also make it difficult to accept revelation. We would rather learn by our own efforts than to have someone give us the answer and expect us to accept it as is. This is especially difficult if the relationship is not close between the giver of the revelation and the receiver. Another problem of pride is that biblical revelation is often distasteful. Scriptures reveal that humans are easily deceived, prone to error, and unable to discern the truth about God. If the biblical description is true, humans may at times be perverse enough to deliberately reject revelation even against the force of reason (Romans 1:18-25).

Responses to perceived conflict between faith and science

Several responses have been proposed to deal with apparent conflict between faith and science.³

Conflict denied. Some scholars attempt to deny any conflict between science and Scripture. What appears to be a conflict may actually be true in some sense not yet understood ("Complementarity"). For example, science and Scripture may be regarded as addressing different spheres

("Dissociation") and conflict is the result of misapplying one or the other source of knowledge to questions outside its legitimate sphere. One form of this argument is the claim of "Non-Overlapping Magisteria" (NOMA)⁴ put forth by the late Stephen Jay Gould. According to Gould, science deals with the material world while Scripture deals with nonmaterial ideas, such as God, values, morals, etc. If this claim were true, we should not be discussing the topic. Such views are manifestly wrong; science and Scripture both clearly address some of the same issues, perhaps most importantly the origin and nature of humans.

Conflict admitted but resolution denied. Another approach is to recognize the conflict between science and faith, but to regard the problem as intractable. Science and faith may be kept in isolation from each other without allowing them to interact ("Compartmentalization"). Or, a person may recognize conflict, but adopt the attitude that it is impossible to know what is true ("Agnosticism"). Alternatively, some prefer to accept one source and reject the other ("Truncation"). Many Christians simply reject science as the work of the devil, while many secularists reject the Bible as fiction. Such views may provide an escape from the hard work of dealing with the issues, but they also prevent any possible breakthrough and leave the individual in intellectual limbo.

Prioritized integration. This approach attempts to integrate faith and science into a comprehensive worldview. This is difficult work, but in the end it will be the most satisfactory approach. It requires that one identify apparent points of conflict, evaluate the pertinent evidence from both science and Scripture, and estimate the probable truth status of each proposal. For example, when evaluating the contrasting claims of science and Scripture on the origin of humans, one may consider whether it is more plausible that humans were created directly through

divine agency, or through ordinary processes observable in nature.

Prioritized integration is consistent with both reason and revelation. It is consistent with reason because it utilizes reason to examine the evidence from both science and Scripture, and it applies reason in evaluating the probable truth status of each proposal. It is consistent with revelation because the Bible writers refer approvingly, albeit sometimes with qualification, to both sources of knowledge. Numerous biblical writers commend reason, wisdom, or similar concepts (Acts 18:4; Isaiah 1:18; 1 Peter 3:15; Proverbs 3:13-15; 1 John 4:1). Revelation is also spoken of highly in Scripture (John 17:17; 1 Peter 1:25; Deuteronomy 29:29; Amos 3:7).

Biblical writers affirm both reason and revelation as sources of knowledge about the world. But they do not attribute equal reliability to both sources. The Word of God is regarded as absolutely true and binding. Human reason is rather easily misled and must at times be corrected by divine revelation

(1 Corinthians 1:19, 20; Romans 1:21, 22; Ecclesiastes 8:17; Isaiah 40:25, 26). While Christians rightly retain a high regard for both reason and revelation, they give revelation a higher priority in areas where they appear to conflict. Some Christians hold that since revelation is more reliable than reason, reason can be ignored in areas of conflict. Unfortunately, the situation is not so simple. Even Scripture can be misused (2 Peter 3:16; Matthew 4:5, 6; John 5:39, 40). Humans may misinterpret divine revelation also, so one must be cautious. Reason itself must be applied to evaluate itself properly, and this can be a source of difficulty when attempting to resolve apparent conflict between revelation and reason.

We may have to suspend judgment in some cases, and in all cases we must recognize the fallibility of our own judgments and opinions. However, this does not mean we should retreat into agnosticism. We can use our reason to make a decision to exercise faith, while recognizing that faith is a

choice not based on demonstration of our belief.

Four points of conflict on origins

Biblical and scientific views of origins differ in a host of details, but most of these flow from a few major issues. Those include the following pairs of contrasting propositions.

1. God and nature.

1.A. Creation: God is active in nature. His activities include regular maintenance actions we observe as natural laws, and also special acts we observe as singularities or miracles.

1.B. Evolution: All events in nature occur in accordance with natural laws. If God exists, He may or may not have started the universe through the Big Bang, but in either case, He has not and does not intervene in natural events.

2. God and humans.

2.A. Creation: God created life in rich diversity from the beginning. Humans are a special creation, endowed with attributes described as the image of God.

2.B. Evolution: Life arose through the action of natural laws and has evolved and diversified from a common ancestor into the rich diversity seen at present. Humans were part of that process, and are fundamentally animals with highly advanced brains.

3. God and time.

3.A. Creation: Creation did not require long ages of time. The universe was created *ex nihilo*, by the word of God. The conditions necessary for life on our planet, and life itself, were created in the short period of a week. The creation of our world occurred at a time in the past measured in thousands of years, although other worlds may have been created at previous times.

3.B. Evolution: The production of living organisms and their environment occurred by gradual, natural processes that required time measured in hundreds of millions to billions of years. Our planet is suitable for life because it happened, by chance, to have the properties that permitted such conditions to develop.

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4. God and natural evil.

4.A. Creation: Natural evil did not exist in the original state of creation. Adam and Eve, the first humans, were given responsibility for the care of the planet and its living organisms. Through the Fall, Satan seized dominion of the planet. Satan's dominion has resulted in the presence of natural evil, death, disease, destruction, etc. Through Jesus Christ, dominion will be restored to humans.

4.B. Evolution: Natural evil is the unpleasant result of the outworking of the laws of nature. There is no personal devil, no Adam, no Fall, and no future Restoration.

Most of the details of interpretation that distinguish creation and evolution are related to these four pairs of contrasting propositions. The first proposition, dealing with the relationship of God and nature, forms the presuppositional foundation of the other propositions. The way in which one responds to these issues will influence which model of origins is favored. A few examples follow.

Attempts to reconcile ideas about origins

Numerous attempts have been made to combine ideas from science and belief in God. Only the most popular of these will be considered here. More extensive discussion is available elsewhere.⁵

Theistic evolution accepts the conclusions of science based on naturalistic philosophy, but tries to include some kind of divine influence to justify the idea that humans were intended and not accidental. It is a very popular model, probably because it seems to be based on science but does not exclude God. However, there is a logical inconsistency with trying to build a view of divine activity on a foundation of philosophical naturalism that denies God's action in nature. The theistic part of theistic evolution contradicts the philosophical foundation of the current scientific view, which

separates God and nature. The evolutionary part contradicts the biblical view of special creation. Theologically, theistic evolution seems to be the worst scheme available; the god of evolution seems worse than no god at all. Scientifically, evolutionary models are contradicted by evidence that suggests the insufficiency of natural processes to generate morphological novelties or the information regulating their development. Ultimately, theistic evolution fails to reconcile science and the Bible because it subjects the Bible to scientific deductions based on philosophical naturalism, and also because it fails to provide sufficient causes in nature, e.g., for the origin of life, molecular novelties, etc.

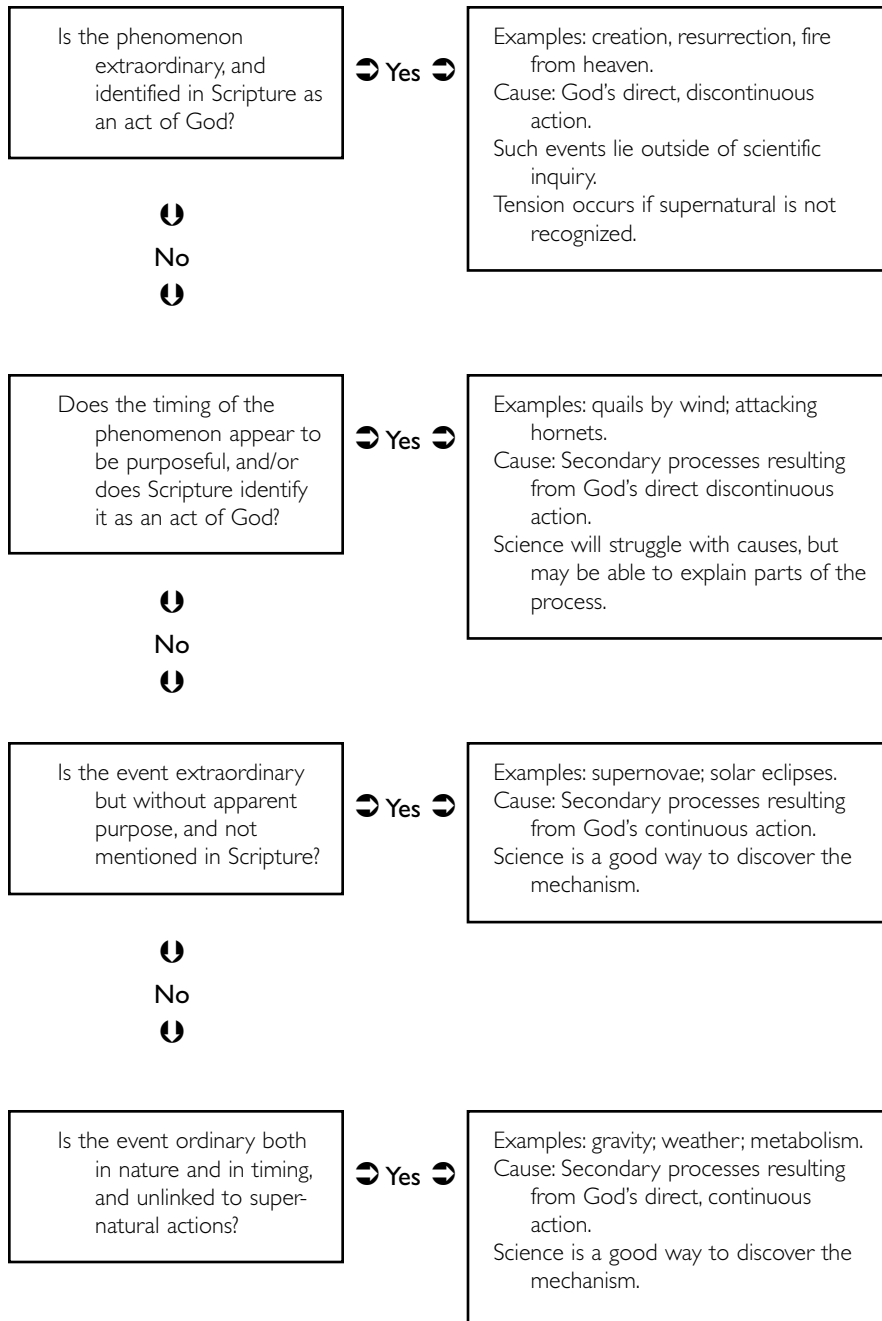
Progressive creation suggests that God separately created many different kinds of organisms, most importantly humans, but He did so over long ages of time. Successive creations were separated by long periods of time in which ordinary processes of natural selection resulted in diversification and evolution on a small scale. This model is open to the possibility that humans may have been created in a recent special creation, perhaps the creation described in Genesis. Scientifically, this model has the objectionable feature of imagining a special creation whenever convenient, as though God can be invoked to fill any gap. In addition, the sequence of supposed creation events in the fossil record differs from the sequence in Genesis. Theologically, the model fails to explain the cause of death, since it implies that death was present long before any humans existed. It also destroys the idea of a Fall, since the fossil record does not indicate any change in nature at the appearance of fossil humans. This removes the logical basis for the story of salvation. Progressive creation, while an improvement over theistic evolution, still fails to reconcile science and the Bible because it violates the norms of scientific thinking by introducing God whenever a "gap" seems to require

this, and also because it destroys the logic upon which the central theme of biblical salvation is based.

Two-stage Genesis creation⁶ is the proposition that Genesis 1:1 refers to an original creation of the universe that left the Earth in an uninhabitable condition that might have lasted for only a few moments, or for eons of time. While the earth was in this condition—dark, wet, unsuitable for life and uninhabited—God, in one week, created a variety of suitable habitats and populated them with living organisms. When the creation was first accomplished it was without fault, but Adam's sin led to Satan's dominion over the earth, bringing disease and death. God will eventually re-create and restore a world without fault, but this must be accomplished while preserving human freedom of choice. Theologically, this theory is far superior to any other yet proposed. Scientifically, it raises some questions that merit discussion.

The Genesis creation account introduces a question in the relationship of the events of the first and fourth creation days. The earth is lighted on the first day, but the sun is not mentioned until the fourth day. How were the first three days and nights caused? Three possible solutions have been proposed: (1) The light of the first three days might have been produced by something other than the Sun. God's presence may have been the source of the light. Or, perhaps a supernova lighted the Earth at that time. Then the Sun could have been created on the fourth creation day. (2) The Sun was actually present on day one, but not visible as a discrete object, perhaps due to a cloud cover that diffused the light. On the fourth day, the cloud cover dissipated and the Sun could be seen as a discrete object. (3) The Sun was present and visible from the first day, but on the fourth day it was appointed to "rule" the day, and function in signs and seasons. Our lack of certainty of which, if any, of

Figure 1. Flow diagram to illustrate a method to reduce tension between science and Scripture by identifying events unsuited to scientific analysis because of supernatural action.



these possibilities is correct does not mean the question has no solution. It only means we don't know what the solution is.

The two-stage creation model also suffers from scientific problems. The best known of these are radioisotope dating and the nature of the fossil sequence. Certain rocks contain the products of radioactive decay that would require hundreds of millions of years to accumulate through natural processes. The two-stage creation model includes the possibility that some rocks might be that old, but does not explain why there should be a progression of dates from older to younger. The existence of a fossil record is readily explained in the two-stage creation model as the result of a global catastrophe known as the Flood. However, the model does not explain why fossils appear in an ordered sequence in which similar kinds of organisms are grouped in successive geological strata that typically correlate over wide areas of the globe. How could a global catastrophe create an ordered fossil sequence rather than a chaotic jumble? Perhaps the pre-Flood world was highly ordered, and the global catastrophe occurred in a highly ordered sequence of stages. While this explanation is consistent with the two-stage biblical creation model, it is an ad hoc addition to the model.

Although the two-stage biblical creation model does not provide an explanation for all our questions, it seems the best available model. It properly gives credence to the scriptural record while accepting as much science as is consistent with the teachings of Scripture. A crucial advantage of this theory over the others is that it proposes a cause sufficient for any phenomenon in nature—an omniscient, omnipotent Creator

Nevertheless, the fact that there are still questions for which the model provides no answer is a signal that we have more to learn in this area.

Continued on page 33

Good God, what have we done to you?

by Randall L. Roberts

The kind of God we serve determines the kind of life we live.

The man, on a mission for his god, made his final and careful preparations before sunrise. He rose quietly, showered, shaved and dressed, and then prayed. Once he finished his prayers, the most important preparation for his mission journey, he gathered together his meager belongings, ready to check out of his motel and head for the airport. He reviewed his ticket one last time. It was all there—the date, the airline, the flight number: September 11, 2001. American Airlines. Flight 11. What *wasn't* there was his real destination. Had it appeared, it would have said, “New York City. World Trade Center. North Tower.”

He closed the door and left the motel. He was absolutely convinced that what he was about to do would honor his god. Sealed with that conviction, he walked out of his motel room into the annals of history.

He did it in the name of his god. In fact, what he did was done *precisely* because of the god he served.

Good God, what have we done to you?

There was another man. And as we look in on him, he is running. Running, racing, *streaking*, he clutches the woman's hand. They race through the lush, luxuriant verdure of that place of pristine perfection. They flee, seeking cover. They have to hide! God is coming! They have already heard His voice in the garden. Their hearts pound, and their eyes bulge.

Why did Adam and Eve run and hide from the God who created and loved them? The answer is quite simple: They ran and hid because of how they understood their God. In fact, their hiding tells us more about *them* than it tells us about their *God*. They

ran and hid because of the kind of God they *understood*. It didn't matter that this God had loved them enough to create them. They were chilled to the bone with fear of Him.

Good God, what have we done to you?

There was yet another man. As we gaze at him, we see him collapse in grief. He had made a vow to God. It was *not* the kind of vow God wanted. In fact, had the man bothered to look into the history of his people, he would have understood that the substance of his vow was *absolutely out of line* with the desires of God. He would have discovered that his God had *expressly forbidden* the very thing he vowed to do. No matter. He made his vow anyway; made it to the God of his understanding. And since he had been successful in his battle, he would now fulfill his vow.

Jephthah's entire sad saga is recorded in Judges 11. Consider a few key verses from the story.

“And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD. He said, ‘If you give me victory over the Ammonites, I will give to the LORD whatever comes out of my house to meet me when I return in triumph. I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering.’”

So Jephthah led his army against the Ammonites, and the LORD gave him victory. He crushed the Ammonites.

“When Jephthah returned home to Mizpah, his daughter came out to meet him, playing on a tambourine and dancing for joy. She was his one and only child; he had no other sons or daughters. When he saw her, he tore his clothes in anguish. ‘Oh, my daughter!’ he cried out. ‘You have completely destroyed me! You've brought disaster on me! For I have made a vow to the LORD, and I cannot take it back.’

“And she said, ‘Father, if you have made a vow to the LORD, you must do to me what you have vowed, for the LORD has given you a great victory over your enemies, the Ammonites. But first let me do this one thing: Let me go up and roam in the hills and weep with my friends for two months,

because I will die a virgin.’

“‘You may go,’ Jephthah said. And he sent her away for two months. She and her friends went into the hills and wept because she would never have children. When she returned home, her father kept the vow he had made, and she died a virgin” (Judges 11:30–39, NLT).

Good God, what have we done to you?

There is yet another story. Can you see the three men huddled around the pathetic figure on the ground? The figure on the ground is a man, though at first glance it doesn't much *look* like a man. But he is—a man named Job, gripped by profound suffering. And the three other men who huddle around him have come to bring him comfort. And yet, what they say causes us to recoil. Time and again, Job is told by his friends, “Buck up, man. Straighten up. You *deserve* what's happening to you. And so, too, did your children. There's nothing happening to you that you didn't do something to earn.”

Why would friends do that to a suffering companion? How could they be so cold-hearted as to say such things to a man in the grip of mortal mourning? The answer may be quite simple, actually. They do it because of how they understood their god.

Good God, what have we done to you?

And finally, this story. The man walks firmly, swiftly, in large steps. His brow is deeply furrowed, his nostrils flare. He is angry. There is one goal on his mind—do away with the group known as “The Way.” He is ready to harass, arrest, or kill in order to accomplish that goal. He will do whatever it takes. And this journey was undertaken to further that goal. Why is he doing it? He is doing because of how he understands his god.

And yet, on his mission of destruction, he is driven to his knees in the dirt by a brilliant light. He voices one question to the voice he hears: “Who are you, Lord?” (Acts 9:5, NLT). The answer to that question is about to

change everything for him.

Good God, what have we done to you?

So, there you have it—five stories. Five stories held together by one simple truth: *the kind of God we serve determines the kind of life we live.*

Running away from God

You know the stories well, no doubt. You may even have paused to consider how in each case the central figure's understanding of God drove him or her to behave in a very specific way. Adam and Eve sin. They fall from their state of perfection. And as soon as they do so, they are aware of their nakedness and feel, for the first time, shame. And then they hear the voice of God. God is asking the first and most enduring question of Scripture, "Where are you?"

Adam and Eve run and hide. Why do they hide? They have known God up to this point as a loving Creator. So why do they hide? Is it their fear of death? Their feeling of shame? Their fear of God? Whatever else it may be, clearly, there is something in their *understanding* of God that drives them to run.

Misunderstanding God's character

Jephthah makes a vow to sacrifice *whomever* or *whatever*—depending on which version you read—comes out to meet him if he returns from battle successful. All he needed was to be even *somewhat* familiar with the sacred past of his people to know that God

had *expressly* forbidden them to offer human sacrifice. The nations around them did it. But they were *never* to do it. Knowing the God of his people would have spared his daughter's life. And yet, his understanding of God suggested that if he only sacrificed something *great* enough, God would crown his efforts with success. Clearly, there was something in his view of God that caused him to make such a dastardly vow.

Job's friends come to comfort him. He has suffered tragedy the like of which most of us will never experience, so it is natural for his friends to respond by coming to his side. But what is most *unusual* is *how* they choose to comfort him. They choose to comfort him by telling him that *he deserves what he's getting!*

Apparently, their understanding of how things work in the world and, more specifically, their understanding of how *God* works in the world, is at the heart of what they say. "God gives good things to good people and bad things to bad people. You are experiencing bad things, therefore, *you* must be bad." Their understanding of God drove all that they did and said.

Living out the love of God

And finally, Paul. Actually, at the time the story took place, his name was *Saul*. Saul is bent on destroying this new sect. He is bent on protecting God from these followers of Jesus of Nazareth. And then he is driven to his knees by the light, and he hears the voice from heaven. He hears the voice that forces the question from his lips, "Who are you, Lord?" Saul is so transformed by his new understanding of God that not only will his name be changed to Paul, but he will be driven from henceforth forever by a new motive—the motive of love. In fact, it is this same man—this fire-breathing purifier of the faith—who will after this say, "The love of Christ constrains me. It is *his* love that guides and controls all that I do." (See 2 Corinthians 5:14.)

He has a new vision, a new understanding, of God.

Do those ancient stories still apply? Does our understanding of God still have such a direct and formative influence on our lives? The recent Hollywood movie, *United 93*, suggests that it does, indeed.

The movie is the story of that doomed flight—the last one to crash on September 11, 2001—where the passengers realized what was happening and fought for control of the airplane. The flight crashed in the Pennsylvania countryside.

A brief scene toward the end of the movie pictures the passengers gathering together, marshaling their courage to storm the cockpit. At the same time, the terrorists realize that the passengers now know their destiny and are about to fight back. The tension builds as the terrorists hope to reach their destination—Washington, D.C.—and as the passengers hope to prevent them from doing so and maybe, in the process, save themselves and others.

As the critical moment arrives, the camera pans two scenes. The first scene is the cockpit, where one terrorist prays desperately to his god for help. And the second scene is the passengers, huddled together at the back of the plane, praying, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name . . ." And as they finish praying, each group moves to carry out what they believe their God might wish them to do.

The kind of God we serve determines the kind of life we live.

The critical need: understanding God's character rightly

If that is true, then it obviously becomes *critical* to understand God rightly. Maybe that is why so many years ago, Ellen White penned these words: "It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be

Correction

Dialogue 19:1 included an essay titled "Before you plan your wedding" (pp. 5-7) listing Willie and Anita Oliver as co-authors. The correct names are Willie and Elaine Oliver, as was noted in the by-line at the end of the essay. The editors regret this error.

proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth.”¹

Darkness because of a misapprehension of God. A message about His character that will enlighten the world. Could it be that a correct understanding of God may be the most important issue facing our world today? Before you dismiss that as hyperbole by a Christian seeking to increase interest in God, consider the world in which we live. It is a world fractured by extremist commitments to radical gods. We think of the Middle East and terrorism, a reality that constantly lurks. But we must also think of places like Waco, Texas. We can talk about bin Laden, but we must also talk about Warren Jeffs. We can focus on militant Islam, but we can also focus on Northern Ireland and Protestants and Catholics. We can even consider the much lower-level but still painful damage that occurs between liberals and conservatives in Christian churches. Would it be too simplistic to suggest that much of this is driven, plainly and simply, by how we understand God?

If for any reason, we still need convincing of the importance of how we understand God, consider the words of Haddon Robinson: “I don’t know if you’ve been to some of the conferences I’ve been to, but I’ve heard people stand up and say: ‘Look, I don’t preach theology. I think people need to have an experience of God. I think people need to know how to relate. And so what I’m into is helping the people, when they come [to church], to have an experience. I don’t give much time to theology.’”

“Well, I thought, you go to a doctor. You say to the doctor, ‘I got a pain in my stomach.’ The doctor says, ‘Well, you need to know I don’t pay much attention to medicine. I took that stuff at school, but I haven’t paid much attention to it. What I’m into

is a ‘bedside manner.’ I want people to feel comfortable around me. Look, why don’t we just cut you open and see what’s inside?”

“Not your knife; not my stomach. “It sounds so good, doesn’t it? We’re into giving people an experience of God. But if you have a deep faith in God and you have a shallow theology, you’ll be giving yourself to superficiality, and you’ll give yourself to nonsense, and you can do great damage to yourself and to others.”²

Isn’t Robinson simply reminding us that *the kind of God we serve determines the kind of life we live?* Such is the lesson from the late, great theologian, minister and writer, A. W. Tozer: “Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question, ‘What comes into your mind when you think about God?’ we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man.”³

The same comes from Archbishop William Temple who said, “If your concept of God is radically false, then the more devout you are, the worse it will be for you. You’re opening yourself to be molded by something base. In terms of your practical life, it would be better to be an atheist.”⁴

Finally, it was Oswald Chambers who said: “It is perilously possible to make our conceptions of God like molten lead poured into a specially designed mould, and when it is cold and hard we fling it at the heads of the religious people who don’t agree with us.”⁵ If such is the case, then we *must* ask: *Who is our God?* What kind of God do we serve?

As Christians, we affirm that God’s ultimate self-revelation was made in Jesus Christ. With such a confession comes the reality that every facet of our understanding of God must be seen through the lens of Jesus. It means that we must take Him seriously when He says, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9, NRSV). It means that our relationships to those who agree with us

as well as to those who disagree with us must be patterned after His life. It means that our treatment of sinners must seek to be as gracious as was His. It means that our mission, like His, is not to condemn the world, but to save it (see John 3:17). It means that we serve a God who is *loving* and *good* and *friendly* and *holy* and *grand* and *humble*. And it means that since we serve such a God, every fact of our theology and, thus, every choice regarding how we live, and every action we take in our treatment of others, must be examined in the light of God’s character. For the truth is difficult to escape: our lives are the outgrowth of the kind of God we worship, know, love and serve.

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A day of delight, a day to remember

by Dan Smith

Keeping the Sabbath is a statement we make to the universe—that we belong to God, our Creator and Redeemer.

Does it really matter? Does the keeping of the seventh day of each week as Sabbath really matter? Why not Sunday? Why not any day? After all, rest, regular rest, physical and spiritual rest, is what is important. Is not the spirit of the law more important than the letter?

Let's begin with the giving of the law. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt. If you asked someone what they did, they'd say, "I'm a brick maker." Parents? Brick makers. Grandparents? Brick makers. Fourteen to 16 hours a day, seven days a week. No holidays. No vacation. Moses asks Pharaoh if they can all go out to the desert and worship God. Pharaoh says, "No, and go find your own straw."

God sends plagues, Pharaoh lets them go, they cross the Red Sea and end up at Mt. Sinai. And God shouts down His Ten Commandments, and right in the middle is the Sabbath: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work" (Exodus 20:8-10).*

What is God trying to say? "You are not just brick makers. You belong to Me. I made you. I brought you out of Egypt. You are not slaves any more. Not just brick makers any more. Don't let yourself be defined by what you do—but by who you are." So the Sabbath, every week, reminds us who we really are. A day to focus on who you really are, a person made in the image of God, made to be soulmates to God.

Better than sex

On the Friday of Creation week, God made Adam. He woke up, looked around, and realized he was all alone. So God created Eve, and gave them this gift we call sexuality.

But here's my problem: Everyone likes sex. But God gave one more gift, that same Friday afternoon. The Sabbath! Why does everyone talk about the one gift, but not the other? Sex was given for pleasure and for family—but so was the Sabbath! Isaiah 58:13 calls the Sabbath a delight! People ask me, "Do we still have to keep the Sabbath? Is the Sabbath still binding on Christians? What kind of question is that? Nobody asks us pastors, 'Do we still have to have sex? Is sex still binding?'" The Sabbath was supposed to be an incredible gift, the best God could do for our benefit and pleasure.

Jesus said to the woman at the well: "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst" (John 4:13, 14). This woman had had five husbands, and so had had plenty of sexual experiences—but yet she was still not satisfied; she was searching. And Jesus said she would be satisfied only by having a relationship with Him. That's why we keep the Sabbath.

Yes, He made it into a commandment. But it was also a gift—a day to enjoy and to remember for generations to come. "The Sabbath was made for man" (Mark 2:27). It was a gift hundreds of years before it became a commandment.

A day to be with Christ

Revelation 3:20 says that Christ is always knocking, hoping we open to Him and let Him in. The Sabbath is ultimately a window on your relationship with God. If you are bored with the Sabbath, it's a pretty good sign that you are bored with God. If the Sabbath is not a delight, it's probably because delight is not part of your picture of God. "I have called you friends," said Jesus (John 15:15). The

essence of friendship is delight.

Of course, the Sabbath has intrinsic pleasure, in and of itself, even without Christ. Not working is nice! Hanging out with your family and friends is nice. Sabbath dinners can be very nice! But the purpose of the Sabbath is friendship with Christ!

The Sabbath is just part of being a Christian, a follower of Christ—to live like Him, to love like Him, and to serve like Him. That's what we should do every day, and even more so on Sabbath. It's His day. It's a "temple in time," as Abraham Joshua Heschel noted. He made it. It's a day to be with Him and to make Him known. He kept the Sabbath, so we keep the Sabbath.

A taste of heaven

And I keep the Sabbath because it gives me a taste of heaven. The Sabbath is a memorial of Creation: "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:11). Heaven is just putting everything back the way it was supposed to be at Creation; so the Sabbath points forward as much or more as it points to the past.

In heaven we will get to be with God all the time—so on the Sabbath we don't work, and we're free to be with God, full-time. In heaven we will worship God, so on Sabbath we go to church, worship God. We walk in nature, we rest, we eat with our family and best friends, because those are the kinds of things that will make heaven heaven. In heaven, time will slow down, because we have so much of it. And so on Sabbath we slow everything down, in a protest against the craziness of our daily lives.

Which means, if you really want to have one definitive rule for what you can do on the Sabbath, here it is: If it's OK to do it in heaven—it's OK to do it on the Sabbath! Because the Sabbath is

supposed to be a taste of heaven.

The war is over!

One more reason to keep the Sabbath: it is a celebration that the war is over. Somebody in Amsterdam once went to the priest to confess.

“I kept a Jew, a refugee, in the attic during the War.”

“That’s not a sin.”

“Yes, but I charged him 20 guilders every week he was up there.”

“That’s not good, but it was for a good cause.”

“OK, that helps. But can I ask one more question: Do I have to tell him the war is over?”

The war is over. Christ won the battle! He shouted out, “It is finished.” On the Sabbath we celebrate the end of the war!

Six days, we are in the midst of a war. But every seventh day we take a break, we have a Sabbath, a sign of what it is going to be like forever someday, when all the evil will be gone, everything will be back to the way it is supposed to be, the whole universe is right again.

But does it really matter?

Does *which* day really matter? Let me see if this illustration helps:

Flags—you can take some pieces of cloth and clean your furniture or wipe your car with them. But the moment you sow them together into the flag of your country, something happens. Now you can’t wipe your shoes with them anymore. It becomes “sacred.” People have died for that flag.

So God tells us, “Six days a week are for your daily duties and your regular work, but the seventh day is a day of Sabbath rest before the Lord your God” (Exodus 20:11, LB). God made it a holy and sacred day. It stands for something, the way a flag stands for something. It makes a statement of who you are, and your supreme loyalties.

When I come back from speaking overseas, there is one moment I always

look forward to. After I land at the Los Angeles Airport and go through customs, I push the cart up the ramp, turn the corner, and there is this long row of people at the railing. And there are my sons, ready to give me a high-five. Those two boys have to be the same boys who were in my house when I left! My wife couldn’t have a little trouble while I was gone, and trade them in! No, the boys at that railing have to be the same boys that she and I created many years ago! And so, when God comes back down, the Sabbath has to be the same day He Himself created so long ago.

We have a family from Iraq in our church, with three sons. The older two went over to Iraq, and ended up marrying two sisters from the church in Baghdad (it’s a great story!). Suppose, at the first wedding, when the older brother got into the limo to go on the honeymoon, the younger sister got in the car. He says, “What do you think you’re doing?”

“Going on the honeymoon.”

“No, you’re not. Go get your sister.”

“Come on, it doesn’t matter, does it? We’re just about alike, we look alike, we come from the same family, it doesn’t matter which one of us goes, come on, I want to go!”

What’s he going to say?! “Get out of the car!” With relationships, it matters. The Sabbath has that kind of symbolic importance to God. It makes a huge statement, that we care enough about God to worship Him on the very day He set aside, thousands of years ago.

Are you ready to take a stand?

In Daniel chapter 6 we read that the king made a law, forcing everybody to pray only to him. Many people went running to see if Daniel would change his way of worshiping. And someday we believe somebody is going to make another law, and everybody is going to be watching to see if you and I are going to change our day of worshiping.

Even God in heaven was watching, to see what Daniel would do: Would

he pray in the closet, or would he throw open the windows and pray the same way he had always prayed? God watched as Daniel went up the stairs, got to the top—and went past the closet and threw open the windows. And God in heaven went, “Yes!” Daniel refused to change his way of worship, and someday God will be watching to see if we will refuse to change our day of worship.

Are you willing to be like Daniel, and decide that God is worth going right to the window, throwing it open, and worshiping God on the true Sabbath, wide-open, not ashamed, proud to take a stand for God?

*Except where noted, all Scripture passages in this article are from the New King James Version.

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The attitude of Jesus toward women

by Miguel Ángel Núñez

By His example, the Savior restored to women their status and dignity before God and started a quiet but lasting revolution.

His life on earth was brief—just 33½ years. His ministry was briefer still—only 3½ years. Yet no one's life and teachings have impacted history so much in such an immense manner as that of Jesus. What He taught and what He did have altered the course of history and have dramatically changed and continue to change millions of lives around the world. His teachings have affected every arena of life—religion, education, work, ethic, health, social justice, economic development, and the very art and science of human living.

One facet of Jesus' mission that is less known but worth reviewing is His attitude toward women. This is particularly important in light of how the world of Jesus' time treated women. Romans and Greeks, Jews and Gentiles, gave women nothing more than second-rank status: useful tools in a male-dominated society—cook the meals, bear and rear children, and play whatever role was assigned to them within the walls of their houses. Individual cases of leadership and bravery stand out here and there, now and then, but by and large women were under the dominion of men. They were considered property that was transferred from father to husband.

Into such a world as that, Jesus came and opened new vistas of human equality and dignity. He opposed human traditions and sought to lead men and women back to God's original plan for humanity. This article will briefly review the attitude of Jesus toward women in his teaching and

ministry contrasted with the status of women in first-century Jewish society.

Status of women in Jewish society

The synagogues of the first century kept records for men only. Men and boys could enter the synagogue to worship, but a screen walled off the section where women and girls were allowed to sit. Women did not count toward the quorum necessary for beginning worship.

Salvation. Tradition maintained that women had no right to salvation on their own merits. Their hope of salvation lay only through attachment to a pious Jewish man. Prostitutes were excluded as lacking such attachment, and widows had to be married to a pious Jew to enjoy that privilege.

Association in public. A man was forbidden to speak to a woman in public places. A rabbi would ignore a woman in public, even if she patiently persisted for some urgent spiritual counsel.

Responsibility for sin. In a funeral procession, the women walked ahead of the casket. It was assumed that they were responsible for sin, and therefore headed the procession, assigned the blame for what had happened. Men, not feeling responsible, walked behind the body.

Impurity. Women were considered ceremonially and socially unclean during their menstrual period. During this time, they were isolated. Even family members were not allowed to come near lest they be contaminated.

Child-bearing as key to value. A woman's value in the eyes of society was linked to her ability to bear children. Barrenness was an awful social stigma. A woman's duty was to bear male children who would thus perpetuate the father's name.

Divorce. Initiating a divorce proceeding was a man's privilege, which he could exercise based on considerations that today seem frivolous and laughable.

Legal status. A woman's word, in court, had to be substantiated by at

least three men; otherwise it had no value.

Education. A woman was not allowed into the synagogue to study; it was considered a waste of time.

Religion. In the temple, women were not allowed near the Most Holy Place. In Jesus' time, there was a women's court in the temple, located beyond the courts reserved for priests and for other men, and some 15 steps lower, indicating a woman's subordinate status.¹

A quiet revolution

Jesus did not start an open revolution against the system that placed women in a subordinate status.

Nevertheless, His life made an eloquent statement. "In none of his actions, his sermons, or his parables do we find anything derogatory referring to women, such as can easily be found in any of his contemporaries."² Consider some examples of how Jesus related to women.

Jesus invited women to be His disciples. Contrary to contemporary expectations, Jesus welcomed women into His close circle of discipleship (see Luke 8:1-3). This attitude contradicted rabbinical stipulations. The women who followed Christ set at naught the presuppositions of the time. They became careful managers of their resources and supported the mission of Christ at critical moments (Luke 8:13). "It was one thing for women to be exempt from learning the Torah, and to be forbidden to associate with a rabbi. But it was quite another thing for them to travel with a rabbi and be responsible for handling financial matters."³ This they did. Simply revolutionary!

Jesus accepted hospitality from women and taught them. The foremost example is that of Jesus' association with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. The Master found rest and fellowship in their home (Luke 10:38-42). While a Jewish rabbi would not so much as look at a woman, Jesus did not hesitate

to speak to Mary and Martha in public or to teach them great truths about death and resurrection (see John 11).

To Jesus, women and men were equally important when it came to learning about the good news of His kingdom. At a time when it was said that “it is better to burn the words of the Torah than to commit them to the care of a woman,”⁴ Jesus indicated that among the choices open to women, Mary had “chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:42, NIV), thus indicating that education was not to be the monopoly of men and that women too were entitled to avail themselves of educational opportunities.

Another example of Jesus’ different attitude toward women was the revelation of His Messiahship to a woman. In the longest conversation recorded in the Gospels, Jesus revealed to the woman at the Samaritan well (John 4:4-42) some of the most profound doctrines of the kingdom: the nature of sin, the meaning of true worship, the universal availability of forgiveness to those who repent, the equality of all human beings regardless of Jew or Samaritan. Thus in a single conversation at the Samaritan well, Jesus shattered two prejudices: that of gender and that of race.

Jesus recognized that in God’s sight the family of Abraham includes both sons and daughters. In healing a woman crippled for 18 years, Jesus placed His hands on her and defined her tenderly as a “daughter of Abraham” (Luke 13:10-17). By using this designation, Jesus gave public notice that women as surely as men inherit the rights promised to Abraham, and in the sight of God, there is neither male nor female.

Nowhere in the Bible is it stated that men have an advantage over women in terms of access to salvation. Contrary to the rabbinical tradition that taught that a woman could be saved only by attachment to a pious Jewish man, Jesus invited both men and women to turn to God and accept the gift of

salvation.

In another case, Christ’s defense and forgiveness of a woman taken in adultery revealed that His definition of sin and provision for salvation provided equal treatment for all, regardless of gender. When some religious leaders brought before Him a woman taken in adultery, Christ stood up for her. He knew that the Jewish leaders in making the accusation against the woman were themselves in violation of the law of Moses. The Levitical law stipulated that both man and woman should stand trial in such cases (Leviticus 20:10), but the critics of Jesus brought only the woman, and not the man involved in the alleged act. The law also required that at least two witnesses were to testify (Deuteronomy 19:15), but the Pharisees brought none. Christ’s response not only gave the accused woman the benefit of the law, but also showed to all those present that His gospel of forgiveness was open to all, based on repentance. Thus He made this remarkable statement: “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (John 8:7, KJV). In other words, Jesus told the men, if you have the courage to accuse her, first look at yourselves in the mirror.

Jesus allowed a sinful woman to anoint Him. When Jesus was invited to a feast in Simon’s house at Bethany, a woman known in the village for her poor reputation rushed forward and anointed Jesus’ feet. Those gathered at the feast, including His disciples, condemned the incident. How could a sinful woman touch the Messiah’s feet, anoint Him, and wipe His feet with her hair? An absolute offence to religious traditions! Those around Jesus could not understand, much less accept, the act of the woman or the attitude of Jesus in letting the woman do what she did. But Jesus said that the woman in so anointing did a beautiful thing, showing to generations to come that like her, all sinners can have the assurance of salvation by coming

to the Savior and placing at His feet their lives in surrender (Mark 14:1-9; Luke 7:36-50).

Jesus used both men and women to symbolize God’s saving acts. In Luke 15 Jesus told three parables to illustrate the profound and timeless truth of God’s search for lost humanity. While the parables of the lost sheep and the lost son illustrate God’s search through male figures of the caring shepherd and the loving father, the parable of the lost coin reveals God’s search through the careful and persistent mission of a woman who does not slacken her task until she finds the coin and rejoices with her friends (Luke 15:8-10). For the legalistic ears of that time this must have sounded heretical.

Jesus elevated women as first witnesses of the greatest event ever to take place in human history—His resurrection. Rabbinical tradition considered women as liars by nature, deriving this concept from Sarah’s reaction on being told that she would have a child (Genesis 18:9-15). In their thinking, Sarah’s denial of having laughed was a lie, because God always tells the truth, and because of her, all women descendants were liars.⁵ No woman could stand as witness. Yet, Jesus rejected this perverse tradition and chose women as the first witnesses of His resurrection (Matthew 28:8-10), “constituting them not only as first receivers of the most important message of Christianity, but the first to proclaim it.”⁶ Jesus reproved the disciples for not believing the witness of these women (Mark 16:14), and thus challenged them to reject the prejudices of the past and walk in the sunshine of His kingdom, in which there is neither male nor female.

Conclusion

In the biblical account of the life of Christ, “women are never discriminated against.”⁷ There is nothing to support the cultural and religious view of

Continued on page 21

PROFILES



If there is any one person who can give a comprehensive description of what the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) does and how it works, as well as sharing the passion and purpose behind its calling to serve humanity, that person would be Birgit Philipsen. The first woman vice president of ADRA, Philipsen, a native of Denmark, is the director of the ADRA Africa Regional Office in Nairobi, Kenya. The office oversees ADRA work in some 35 countries—from Sierra Leone in the west to Ethiopia in the east.

Philipsen is not new to the relief organization. After attending college in Collonges, France, she taught high school in Norway for a short time. The call of ADRA was too loud to ignore, and so in 1991 Philipsen joined the staff of ADRA Denmark as a secretary. During this time, she and her husband raised their three daughters, and Philipsen learned everything from finances to logistics to program development. In 2000, she became ADRA's Denmark's country director, and was appointed to her present position in 2006.

Birgit Philipsen

Dialogue with the first woman regional vice president of ADRA

Although more than 70 percent of her time last year was spent in grueling travel around Africa, Philipsen is enjoying her role in ADRA. She is uniquely equipped for the position. In addition to her passion and experience, Philipsen's graduate work in development, through a program from Andrews University, has paid dividends. Philipsen wrote her Master's thesis on post-traumatic stress disorder in development workers. Her research showed that development/relief workers, similar to soldiers, are exposed to high levels of stress and trauma by the very nature of their work in regions affected by war and poverty. In many cases, they face risks of rape, assault, and theft. Some suffer stress because they have no clear purpose or job description. She also discovered that training for what lies ahead prepares relief workers to meet such risks and enables them to return to "normal life."

Philipsen grew up speaking Faroese, and is multilingual. She speaks English, Danish, Norwegian, French, German, and "quite a bit of Creole." Currently she is learning Swahili.

■ *When did you become interested in relief work?*

In high school in Norway when I was 18. I saw a film about missionaries and all of a sudden I felt like God was calling me to go to Africa. I got some clear answers to prayer, and at 19, I went as a student missionary to Africa. I had actually planned to become a teacher in Norway, but instead I went to Sierra Leone where I spent one year. After getting married and working for ADRA in Denmark for several years,

my family and I moved to Africa in 2006.

■ *In your work, do you have opportunities to share your faith?*

Yes, almost every day. Working in a donor setting provides contacts with government and embassy people—people who are highly educated and highly placed. I have found so many opportunities to talk about what ADRA and the Adventist Church are doing. And I have always made it a point to explain that ADRA is an agency of the church. Often my contacts say they don't know a lot about the Adventist Church, and that leads me to many good conversations.

When we bring evaluators and journalists who know nothing about us to our projects, they become some of our greatest spokespersons. They've seen our programs and how we work, and they go away impressed.

■ *There are a lot of relief and development agencies out there. What makes ADRA special?*

Our connection with the church. I have worked very much in the donor world, with most of my experience in Denmark. We had quite a few evaluations and visits or consultants from the government and outside companies, and one thing I heard many times is that they were amazed at the commitment they saw. We are a faith-based organization. ADRA work is not just a job—it is a calling and a commitment, and you can sense it even among people of other faiths who work for us. They're influenced by this Christian culture.

■ *What are some ways you see ADRA supporting the mission of the Adventist Church?*

Perhaps the most important one is ADRA's encouragement of Adventists to reach out to people in need around them. Often church members, especially young people, have difficulty identifying with the church. Young people don't always enjoy a lot of theology, but in ADRA they see a challenge, an identity; they see a serving church.

As a church we may have a tendency to want people to come to us. We invite them for meetings we think they should come to. ADRA is the opposite; it goes where people are. It is the outreach of the church, helping those in need.

I am glad we have Adventist institutions that provide us with trained people to ensure quality in ADRA work. That might be one of the reasons why ADRA succeeds in some places where other organizations don't—we do have a lot of committed people who have been to our church's educational and training institutions. They have a sense of mission, and they become effective workers.

■ *What are some things people may not know about ADRA?*

We all know that the church runs schools all over the world, but how many of us know that ADRA assists people who are not able to attend these institutions? We conduct adult literacy programs. We are involved in education for women, health education, HIV/AIDS awareness, and so on. We build classrooms and provide needed training for teachers. We help health care institutions by providing needed equipment, training in community health education, and preventive health care.

Toward the end of my work with ADRA Denmark we realized that in Africa it's important to assist communities to develop their capacity to solve their problems. We worked toward

not only providing education in a community but also combining education with health and food security so as to achieve the overall objective of *community development*. In Rwanda, for example, we had thousands of people join functional adult-learning programs, teaching people not only reading and writing, but also life skills. When you combine teaching life skills with literacy, people learn more efficiently and effectively.

In Uganda we have invested a lot in teacher training. That includes not only giving professional skills in classroom management but also providing motivation to retain teachers in rural schools. We have given these teachers housing and taught them skills to maintain those houses. We have trained parent-teacher associations so they could continue running the school after we left. With community involvement, we constructed 110 schools, trained 5,500 teachers, and established 80 parent-teacher associations.

■ *What gives you the most satisfaction in your work?*

To be able to work with people and to see how your work is really changing people's lives for the better.

■ *Disappointments and frustrations come along. How do you handle these challenges?*

First, I know I am never alone. God is always there. I have often faced challenging situations in which I just had to say "God, you have to help me now." He has never let me down. That is one of the secrets of being able to keep going even when the work is very demanding and you are constantly thrown into situations in which you really don't know what to do.

Second, keep things in balance. For example, even when things are hectic, I make it a point not to compromise on Sabbath. Between work and worship, work and family, there needs to be a perspective of balance. To be honest, it's not easy. When my children

were young, it was a constant struggle to keep things steady, to be immersed in the work you love and care for the family you cherish. Having a demanding job can be enriching to one's family life—there's so much to share, in pictures and stories.

Third, learn from others. Around you are people who know how to have fun even when things are tough. There's so much one can learn from others. After all, you are doing a job that God wants you to do.

■ *If readers are interested in serving ADRA, how can they get involved?*

Don't think that by doing one type of education you will end up in ADRA. ADRA can use people with a variety of educational backgrounds. Very often the best people we have are those who have a college degree in the field that was of interest to them at that time, but take a graduate program in development. That gives a broad approach to education and particular skills in development.

How does one get to work for ADRA? Try to volunteer for a few months or a year and then you will know what it is to work with ADRA at the field level. You will also know people in ADRA, and you can see what is it you are really interested in doing in ADRA.

Interview by Kimberly Luste Maran

Kimberly Luste Maran is an assistant editor of the *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World* magazines (www.adventistreview.org and www.adventistworld.org).

Birgit Philipsen's email address: birgit@adra-africa.org.

For work opportunities in ADRA visit http://jobs-adra.icims.com/adra_jobs/jobs/candidate/intro.jsp.

PROFILES



Born in an Adventist family, Jordi Baget manifested early his interest in painting. When he was 12 his parents encouraged him to study art. His excellent grades allowed him to be accepted at the prestigious San Jorge's School of Fine Arts in Barcelona. In order to master the difficult skill of portraiture, he later attended the Royal Art Circle of Barcelona.

Growing up in a city well known for art, the budding painter visited the art museums and exhibitions of his famous hometown, which had a profound impact on his passion for painting. During his career, Baget's artistic gifts have been widely recognized. As early as 1982, he was awarded Spain's National Prize for Painting. His work has been noted in individual and collective exhibitions in various European centers.

Jordi Baget is a member of the Urgell Seventh-day Adventist Church in Barcelona, where he plays the organ for the worship services.

Jordi Baget

Dialogue with an Adventist painter from Spain

■ *How did you become involved in full-time painting?*

Even though my parents encouraged me to draw and paint from a very early age, I do not think they ever expected that this will become my life vocation. Since I liked all the arts, they enrolled me in a school of arts as well as in a school of music. Later they arranged for me to work in a workshop that produced finely crafted wood furniture. That work was hard, but creative. It gave to me a very clear sense of volumes, reliefs, and shapes. But I preferred to paint. At the beginning, and in order to become self-supporting, I had to accept many commercial assignments. I did not like these always, but it set me on course.

■ *As an artist, are you "born" or "made"?*

A little of both. But only persistent, hard work, leads to success in any field.

■ *Do you have any preferences for certain themes and subjects?*

I feel especially attracted by scenes with many moving figures, such as markets, harbors, beaches with fishermen, urban scenes, and children playing. This is mainly because of the additional difficulties that these scenes pose to the artist from a technical point of view. Obviously, it is easier to paint a peaceful landscape, with no movement. I like both, but I am thrilled by overcoming technical challenges of movement.

■ *But you also paint still-life. . .*

True. I have a special preference for still-life subjects. I have learned the

most while working on such paintings. In front of a still-life composition one can observe in detail the plays of light and shadows, the artistic value of volumes, textures, and shapes. I think that this kind of deep concentration helped me to better penetrate my subjects.

■ *Where do you usually paint?*

Mostly in my workshop, but I used to paint a lot outdoors. When one paints from nature, the light changes constantly. One has to observe well and work fast. Today I prefer to take photos and work at my own pace in the studio, using them for general reference. I can paint from them only because I have worked a lot in the open air.

■ *What about your choice of techniques?*

My techniques today are very eclectic and personal. For my figurative works I mainly use oil and acrylic that I prepare myself from basic materials. (I have always avoided the watercolors because they seem to me too difficult!) But for my abstract projects I use besides oil and acrylic colors very different components such as wood, cement, different types of sand and earth, and even some synthetic materials. These allow me to explore different creative concepts on effects and textures, which I adapt to the inspiration of the moment, the subject and my own temperament. At present I am fully committed to this type of quest for new ways of depicting abstract aesthetics.

■ *Looking back to your career, can you identify any specific periods?*

I am surprised myself to observe that I have had quite a consistent trajectory. However, around the year 2000 I began exploring new forms of abstract expression. One could say that “the classical Baget” is more figurative, while “the late Baget” is more impressionist, and more abstract, freer.

■ *What gives you greatest satisfaction in your work?*

I enjoy most the feeling of freedom in front of the canvas, realizing that I am creating something new. With due respect to the enormous difference, I think that I understand the text of the creation account that “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good” (Genesis 1:31, NIV). There is no joy like this feeling of fulfilment, of accomplishment, when you complete a work that turns out to be a success.

When I decide to create something, I do not come with a very specific idea. I set myself in front of my canvas, fully open to inspiration. I work and work and work following my intuition. I do not leave a painting until I like it, until I am satisfied.

■ *Are there any paintings that you prefer over others?*

Yes, I keep at home two paintings that I think I would never sell: A still life with onions and an urban landscape in Budapest. These two works, thus far, are the ones that brought me more satisfaction than any other. But my relatives, my customers, and most of my friends, prefer other paintings.

■ *Do you wish to share a personal story?*

As an artist, I prefer not to repeat in my paintings the same motif because it brings to mind unpleasant connections with the commercial side of art. In one of my most successful exhibitions in Barcelona, a gentleman told me that he wanted to buy one of my paintings, but left without purchasing it. Soon after somebody else came and bought it. The following day, the first customer came to buy the painting, but since

it was already sold, he became very disappointed, even angry. “Please,” he pleaded, “paint another one exactly like that for me!” I accepted to paint something similar, but not exactly like the first one. That customer happened to be the popular Spanish writer Manuel Vázquez Montalbán.

■ *And what frustrates you in your work?*

I get a bit sad when I do not achieve what I set out to do in a painting. That is why I do not like to take orders. I have also avoided as much as possible portrait painting. Not only because they seldom are appreciated by the person portrayed, but also because they seem to restrict my freedom.

■ *What do you do when you do not like the outcome of your painting?*

I erase the whole project and start again. I am quite patient and resilient. These are important qualities for painters. I seldom give up.

■ *You are also a musician! I've seen you playing the organ in church.*

Since my childhood I have loved music. I studied piano and composition at the conservatory under great teachers. I do play the organ often in the Barcelona central Adventist church. Although I am just an amateur, I play in the church as my humble service to God. What I like the most is to compose music for choir and piano, using the computer.

■ *How has the fact of being a committed Christian affected your life as an artist?*

To be a believer is a great help for an artist. God motivates and inspires us to accomplish a better work. I joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church through baptism when I was 17, and consider it a great privilege to be a Bible-believing Christian. As I look around, I discern God as an extraordinary, enormously creative artist. When I think that He has created us in His image, I am amazed and

thankful. I learn from God every day and, although I feel very small in His presence, I share the joy of creating something through the skills He has given me.

■ *What advice would you give to a young person interested in becoming a professional painter?*

Work hard. Learn well the techniques. Observe a lot. Study the masterpieces. Do not forget that your best teachers are life and nature. Ask God to lead your life and make you happy in His service.

Interview by Roberto Badenas

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Roberto Badenas is the Euro-Africa Division Education Director and *Dialogue* representative. His email address: roberto.badenas@euroafrica.org.

Better vision in the body of Christ

by Lisa M. Beardsley

Like the man born blind, we need Jesus to touch our eyes so that our sight may be whole, to see the near and the distant.

How good is your vision? Someone with 20/20 vision is considered to have 100 percent visual efficiency. That is to say, such a person standing 20 feet away from an object sees that object how a visually 100 percent efficient person would see it from 20 feet away. Those with poor eyesight have a higher second number. A person with 20/40 vision has 85 percent visual acuity and must stand at 20 feet to see what someone with normal vision can see standing at 40 feet away. Vision of 20/40 in at least one eye is required to pass a driving test in the United States. Vision of 20/200 or worse is the legal definition of blindness.

Those with a smaller second number see better than average. I have had good vision all my life and for distance, my vision is 20/15. It means that at 20 feet, I can see what others must move up to 15 feet away to see. As kids, I invariably won the license plate and road sign alphabet games we played when we traveled.

With my naturally good eyesight, you can imagine my distress a few years ago when the words in my Greek Bible and the text on my PDA started looking fuzzy. Soon I had reading glasses at the office, stashed all over the house and in the car glove box.

It seemed I could never find a pair though, when I needed them. I had developed “short arm syndrome” or presbyopia. Literally, *presby* means “old man” and *opia*, vision—old man vision. Presbyopia is a normal process that happens to everyone as the lens of the eye becomes less flexible and the ability to focus sharply for near vision is lost.

Happily, I learned about monovision, a single contact lens that adjusts one eye for near objects. A contact lens for reading is placed on the non-dominant eye, and if one is lucky, the brain will adapt. Monovision can also be achieved with laser surgery, but one should be older when the presbyopia finally stabilizes to have it performed. Like handedness, we all favor one or the other eye, and that is what gives us depth perception or binocular vision. The dominant eye is the one used to focus a camera or aim with to shoot an arrow. With monovision, the dominant or master eye is used for distance vision and the non-dominant or slave eye is then focused for near to intermediate vision. It took a few weeks for my brain to rewire itself, and, until I could adjust, I had to drive with one eye shut, and walk down stairs like an old lady, because my depth perception was off.

Organizational presbyopia

Organizations can also develop presbyopia. With experience comes the ability to see the big picture better, true. But as organizations age, they too can lose sight of important details. IBM was ambushed by Apple which

was co-founded by Steve Jobs, barely in his twenties; and Steve Wozniak, who was just five years older. IBM focused on mainframes and ignored the trend toward a market for personal computers. IBM was encumbered by layers of bureaucracy that insulated decision-makers from current information about consumer trends. Its overhead and tradition resulted in a sluggish organization that was costly to manage and slow to respond to cultural and consumer shifts.

The Adventist Church needs both older people and young people. It needs young people because they see what is of relevance to their generation. They have fresh, creative ideas. And the church needs eyes that are blue, brown, single-lidded, and double-lidded—many eyes, all the better to see with. Different age, cultural, and ethnic groups see those specific details relevant to that group. Genetic diversity is the best insurance for the survival of biological organisms in an uncertain world. It is also critical to vitality as a church that is able to adapt to varying environments and challenges.

Homogeneity in the church contributes to smoother interpersonal relations but inhibits the ability to adapt in creative, culturally appropriate ways to a diverse world. Young eyes help us see that we must meet today's challenges in new ways and not with yesterday's methods. The pith helmet worn well by Albert Schweitzer and other missionaries of yesteryear is wholly ill-suited for the challenge of the postmodernist, urban jungle of this century.

The near and distant vision

The church can also benefit from corrective glasses and this, I propose, is our theology, succinctly encapsulated in our name: Seventh-day Adventist. The book of Ecclesiastes wrestles with whether near or distant vision is dominant. To improve one's perspective, the Teacher advises pondering funerals not feasts, crying rather than laughter,

and above all, remembering that in the end, we are accountable to God for our choices (Ecclesiastes 7:1-3). At the same time, the Teacher counsels immersing oneself in the joys of daily life: work, families and even our meals.

I visited Pacific Union College in California this spring. The bright yellow rapeseed was blooming in the vineyards, and cherry trees were a frothy pink. Despite pricey restaurants and hotels, thousands of people go to Napa Valley for its beauty, wine-tasting, fine dining, pampering at spas and five-star hotels, and to shop for artwork or other luxury items. I asked the college Sabbath school class how they live in the beautiful Napa Valley, the very lap of Bacchus—the Greek god of wine—as Seventh-day Adventists who believe in the second advent of Christ. One person quipped, “All this and heaven too!”

We can have both: joy today and joy in the hereafter—and the Sabbath mediates the two. It invites us to leave the dailyness of our lives to celebrate the bounty and beauty of creation. Because the Sabbath is part of the recurring pattern of life that centers on the here and now, the Sabbath is the near vision that attends to the ordinary joys of daily life, itself a part of the weekly cycle. The Sabbath provides a vista from which we can enjoy creation, others, and our Creator.

The second part of our name, Adventist, looks beyond the weekly cycle to a definite future event that will end the dailyness of our lives as we now know them to be. This aspect of our theology—the long view—is what gives depth and definition to our daily routines of eating, sleeping, working, and living in relationship to others and this world. The larger view of a great controversy between God and Satan, which will end evil and death itself, is what gives us binocular vision. It enables us to see the close at hand even better.

It is easy for the ordinary and the immediate to dominate our entire

attention. To have the right perspective, one needs to see the near-at-hand as framed by the bigger picture. Depth-perception and binocular vision is needed to successfully navigate the routine as well as the big decisions like what career to choose and whom to marry, the right degree of cultural adaptation and contextualization in evangelism, when to take a stand on social issues such as war, poverty, or AIDS, and what our portfolio of ministries should be as a church today. None of this is easy to see, which is why clear vision is so essential.

“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it,” wrote Paul (1 Corinthians 12:27, NIV). That body benefits from eyes that are young, old, and different shaped and colored, to creatively respond to the near, the culturally specific, and the contemporary issues of our day. Like corrective lenses, vision is further sharpened by sound theology that gives us binocular vision. And like the man born blind, we need for Jesus to touch our eyes so that our sight may be whole and we see everything clearly as we should.

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Attitude...

Continued from page 15

His time that saw women as inferior. On the contrary, “the attitude and the message of Jesus signified a break with the dominant worldview.”⁸

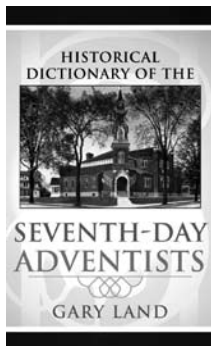
Jesus “did not relate to women in harmony with the norms of the patriarchal system of his time, nor did He take part in a system that was, by definition, repressive toward women.”⁹ Openly but without fanfare, Jesus dealt a deathblow to the curse of tradition that denied dignity to women. Through His example and teaching, Jesus reclaimed for His new kingdom the blessings of His original creation, the equality of the two genders in the sight of God.

Miguel Angel Núñez (Ph.D., Universidad Adventista del Plata) teaches theology at Universidad Peruana Unión, where he also directs the program in pastoral theology and psychology. Dr. Núñez is the author of many articles and more than 20 books. This essay is based on a section of his book *Cristología: Descubriendo al Maestro* (3rd edition, 2006). His email address: miguelanp@hotmail.com.

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BOOKS



Historical Dictionary of the Seventh-day Adventists
by Gary Land (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2005, 419 + xx pp.; hardbound).

Reviewed by Nancy Vyhmeister

Gary Land is chair of the Department of History and Political Science at Andrews University, in Berrien Springs, Michigan, where he has been teaching since 1970. Aside from his book *Teaching History: An Adventist Approach* (2000), his voluminous writings have centered on the history of Adventism, especially in North America.

Land's *Historical Dictionary of the Seventh-day Adventists* is number 56 of Scarecrow's series of Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements. As a historical dictionary, Land's work is a treasure trove of information. The book starts out with a six-page chronology of events that have shaped and marked Adventism—from William Miller's 1818 teaching that Christ would return sometime in 1844 to the first of the Faith and Science conferences in 2002. The nine-page "Introduction" gives a brief overview of the church's history. The bulk of the book (pp. 11-337) deals with an Academy-to-Zimbabwe presentation of terms, persons, places, institutions, and issues in Adventism over time. The "Bibliography" (pp. 339-419) is introduced by a 12-page bibliographical essay that attempts to place key writings by Adventists and about Adventism in their appropriate historical setting. The bibliography is divided into sections on backgrounds, history, biographies, beliefs and practices, dissident movements, and interpretations.

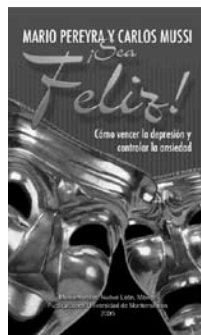
In his effort to gather and condense vast amounts of information about an expanding global church, Land evidently has relied upon the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*. This might account for some inaccuracies, such as the erroneous information that Chile's first secondary school opened in 1963 or the incomplete description of the Latin-American Adventist Theological Seminary. Land's dependence on the *Encyclopedia* would also explain the meager information given about non-North American fields during the 1980s and 1990s. Thus, Solusi University, chartered by the Zimbabwe government in the 1990s, still appears under "Solusi Mission."

The choice of articles seems to respond to Land's background and interests. This is understandable, yet the emphasis on the more liberal aspects and persons in

Adventism might be confusing to some. For example, Land calls Richard Rice's *Reign of God* "the best overview of Adventist theology" (p. 344), when parts of it are considered by some to not represent true Adventist teaching. The article "Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International" (p. 267) might lead some to think that this gay organization is mainstream. The article "Sanctuary Doctrine" (p. 260) is mostly a history of the doctrine and of the controversies surrounding it; little is said about the theological meaning and significance of the doctrine to Adventist believers. The omission of Ariel Roth's *Origins: Linking Science and Scripture* (Review and Herald, 1998) while including *Creation Reconsidered* (p. 347), which is not mainstream Adventism, might give further indication of Land's sympathies.

The wealth of reliable information in this handy work outweighs its few problems, which are understandable in a book of this scope. The dictionary section opens windows to readers unfamiliar with Adventist terms and people. Perhaps the best part of the book is the bibliography on Adventism, a useful tool to any who wish to study the topic.

Nancy Vyhmeister (Ed.D., Andrews University) is still reading students' papers in her active retirement, after some 40 years of helping to prepare Adventist pastors and missionaries in many countries of the world.



Sea feliz: Cómo vencer la depresión y controlar la ansiedad

by Mario Pereyra y Carlos Mussi
(Montemorelos, Nuevo León, México: Publicaciones Universidad de Montemorelos, 2005; 169 pp.; paperback).

Reviewed by Nancy Carbonell

Depression has become an increasingly dangerous health hazard. It knows no frontier—geography, gender, age, culture, religion, or economic status. People of all strata fall victim to this disease of the modern age, and the question that everyone faces is: How to overcome depression and anxiety? How to be happy in an environment saturated with depression? Mario Pereyra and Carlos Mussi address the issues from a psychological, physical, and spiritual viewpoint. Their book is easy to read, sprinkled with interesting stories and examples, and lists of activities and self-assessment tools

to measure one's level of depression and/or anxiety.

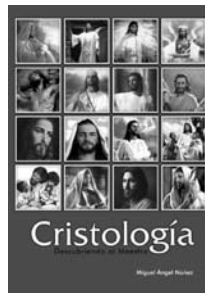
The first chapter identifies thinking patterns and personality traits that either help or hurt us. The authors present the latest work on positive psychology and discuss ways to increase psychological "hardiness." Chapters 2 and 3 deal with clinical depression, its symptoms, treatment options, and suggestions on what the victims and their loved ones can do overcome the problem. Chapters 4 and 5 discuss the various types and treatment modalities for anxiety, and delineate strategies useful in its control. Chapter 6 addresses the meaning of past, present, and future happiness, and provides suggestions on how everyone can learn to "reprogram" negative self-talk for more positive, optimistic self-talk, which are the hallmarks of happy people. "Happiness," say the authors, "is not a rest area in the road, it is a way of traveling through life" (p. 122). The concluding chapter turns to the biblical story of Elijah—a classical case of anxiety and depression—and draws principles and insights that can be useful in understanding clinical anxiety and depression.

The book has a positive approach. It goes beyond discussing the problems and lays the groundwork of how to turn bitterness into joy and how to journey along the road to happiness. The topics of dealing with depression and anxiety, developing hardiness, and finding happiness are all individual topics that could lead to books of their own, but the authors have succeeded in putting all these in one readable, flowing narrative grounded in scientific findings and spiritual moorings.

Helpful as the book is, one must not expect to read it through in one sitting and walk away cured. The authors are not providing a self-diagnostic, much less a self-treatment, tool. Their task is to help understand the problem of depression and to discover the way of recovery. They present an accurate picture as to how one may benefit by seeking professional counseling and getting appropriate forms of treatment. These forms of intervention might include: learning what is happening and how to personally deal with the illness (psycho-educational interventions), seeking the guidance of a therapist who can guide and explore a more functional way to confront life's challenges (psychotherapy), and the need to address the biological causes of one's illness (by the possible use of psychotropic medications).

The book is a good resource guide for counselors, pastors, and professors who work with individuals struggling with depression and anxiety.

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Cristología:
Descubriendo al Maestro
by Miguel Ángel Núñez (Lima, Perú:
Fortaleza Ediciones, 2006; 149 pp;
paperback).

Reviewed by Roberto Badenas

Miguel Ángel Núñez is a versatile author. In writing, he is as comfortable with philosophy and theology as he is with education and family life. Whatever he writes, two facts stand out: readability and commitment to core biblical values and standards, seen from an Adventist perspective. This author of at least 26 books and many more articles has now come up with an updated version of his book on Christology.

Although his intended audience is theology students, the book's style and substance reaches beyond serious students to touch ordinary Christians and take all of them nearer to "Jesus of Nazareth, who walked among us and lives today for us" (p. 9). "Its intention," says the author, transcends the academic: It "is essentially devotional" (p. 12).

Dr. Núñez, being a theologian, approaches the doctrine of Christ from the perspective of systematic theology and deals with the issues of Christ's pre-existence, divinity, incarnation, vicarious death, resurrection, and glorification. The author places the biblical data in the context of the historical development of the doctrine as he devotes one whole chapter to summarize the history of controversies in Christology, including some within Adventism. This third edition (the first appeared in 2000) has two new chapters: one on the resurrection of Christ, the other on the debate about the "historical Jesus." This last—which is also the longest—on the quest for the historical Jesus, consists mainly of a commented bibliography on the topic.

The four appendixes deal with issues not often found in other Christology books: namely, "The date of Jesus' birth," "Jesus and women," "The Second Adam," and "The Incarnation of God." The reader will also appreciate the inclusion of a few practical charts and tables, such as the one comparing the biblical texts where Christ is presented as divine and those that present Him as human (pp. 38, 39), and the table on the Old Testament messianic prophecies and their fulfillment in the New Testament (p. 56).

An interesting bibliography and 17 pages of notes complete the resources of this manual. To bridge the gap between dry dogmatics and living actuality the author indulges himself to some unexpected references to docu-

Continued on page 27

VIEWPOINT

Christians and homosexuality: Awareness, understanding, and healing

by Chris Blake

Awareness

Scene 1. I'm attending a conference titled "Adventists and AIDS: Our Stories, Our Response" at Sligo Adventist Church in Takoma Park, Maryland, U.S.A. I consider myself fairly aware of the AIDS epidemic. What I'm not prepared for at this conference is the pain and helplessness that pour from the homosexual community in attendance. These aren't angry, profane protesters—these are hurt-filled, humble people. Most have been wounded by fellow church members.

One young homosexual describes his childhood, when from his first thoughts he knew he was different: He was attracted to males only. Then he points out the absurdity of believing that anyone would *choose* such an orientation. "Why would I *choose* to have my family be ashamed of me?" he demands. "Why would I *choose* to be subjected to constant persecution? Tell me this," he asks a stunned audience, "when, exactly, did you *choose* to be *heterosexual*?"

I couldn't say. Could you?

An older homosexual man recounts how three Seventh-day Adventist congregations denied him membership despite his having been celibate for 15 years. With tears in his voice, he asks the audience, "How long do I have to be celibate before I can become a member again?"

Scene 2. A letter arrives for me. It's written by a Seventh-day Adventist mother of a homosexual.

"I never thought of myself as the crusader type, but I guess that is what I've become in the past three and a

half years since I found out about my son.

"Not too long ago, I talked to the senior pastor here and offered to lead a homosexual support group in the church if he thought there was a need. He said he could think offhand of at least a dozen families who knew about their kids' being homosexual, and several others who didn't....

"I think probably the great majority of our members are as ignorant, misinformed, and prejudiced as I was before I found out about my son. I thought gays were perverted weirdos who chose to live that way. My immediate reactions were disgust and refusal to think about it when the subject came up.

"The really sad thing is that my son grew up feeling the same way, so when he realized he was that kind of monster, he had a terrible self-concept. He wanted so badly to be normal, to get married and have children, and he prayed for years that God would change him. When that didn't happen, he gave up on God."

Understanding

Homos. Gays. Lesbians. Queers. These words roll off the tongues of some people with ease, contempt, and loathing—and fear. For others who are homosexual or who know a loved one who is, the words stab and scar with unimaginable force.

Some people's fear emanates principally from the mystery of human sexuality—a confusing, tumultuous, electrifying drive that can leave us breathless with wonder or plagued by guilt. Very simply, we aren't quite sure of ourselves about this *sex* thing.

In researching this article, I've read hundreds of pages of articles, reports, surveys, anecdotes, and testimonials on the subject of homosexuality. I've received input, some of it unsolicited, from dozens of homosexuals and heterosexuals.

It's time to reason together. It's time for healing. The following are eight understandings before healing can begin.

1. There's a difference between *being a homosexual* and *practicing homosexuality*. As Letha Scanzoni writes, homosexuals belong to "that minority of persons who find themselves romantically attracted, through no conscious decision of their own, to someone of the same sex. Their *orientation* is homosexual. To speak of a homosexual orientation is to speak of a way of *being* and *feeling*—whether or not those feelings are ever translated into sexual acts."¹

"It's like telling me I can't have green eyes," one homosexual says. "The color of my eyes is simply a natural part of me. Oh, I could cover them up for a while, wear blue or brown contacts, but that wouldn't change the reality. My eyes *are* green, and my sexual orientation *is* gay."

The repeated theme from homosexuals is, "From my earliest memories, I always knew I was different." Their secret crushes and sexual arousals focused on persons of the same sex, and they often felt confused and trapped by their feelings.

2. Virtually nobody chooses to be homosexual. People may choose to do an all-or-nothing approach—bisexual or asexual—and may choose to engage in

or not engage in homosexual acts, but sexual orientation as defined earlier is generally not a matter of choice. In this respect, the term *sexual preference* is a misnomer.

The exact causes of homosexuality are unknown. Many single-cause theories abound, but in general, homosexuality is “likely to be the result of an interaction of several different factors, including genetic, hormonal, and environmental factors.”²

At the heart of the controversy is this question: Is homosexuality a changeable condition or not? If the root causes are strictly genetic, the chances for change are comparable to changing a leopard’s spots. If the environmental context caused the condition, then changing the “environment”—even if it’s the paneling of a mind—might effect change.

However, a child chooses neither how she is born nor how he is raised. We shouldn’t hold a person responsible for her or his sexual *orientation* any more than we hold a person responsible for skin color (nature) or how a preschooler is dressed (nurture). Whatever one’s orientation, it happens early, prior to the age of accountability. Blaming the homosexual for his or her sexual orientation is both wrong-spirited and wrong.

3. “Gay bashing” is never acceptable, especially for Christians. When we speak of gay bashing, we must define what it is and what it is not. Gay bashing is more than simply disagreeing with “gay rights” for the not-so-simple reason that the term can refer to anything from granting equal access to job opportunities to making homosexual marriages legal. We may be both for and against gay rights. And merely disagreeing with an issue doesn’t constitute *bashing*. Bashing is attacking in a hostile, virulent way.

Christians should be at the forefront in protecting the rights of minorities, whether they are orphans and widows, or the homeless, aged, uneducated, unattractive, unborn. The issue is

really *human* rights, not gay rights. We are here to protect basic human rights for everyone.

What rights should we as Christians guarantee for homosexuals? “The right to have a job without losing it and the right to walk down the street without getting beaten up” would be a good start, says Gregory King of the Human Rights Campaign Fund.

The right to be treated as a child of God is another.

4. Many fears about homosexuality are irrational. Particularly through understanding two facts, homophobia (an irrational fear or hatred of homosexuals) can be purged:

A. If you aren’t sure whether you are a homosexual, the far greater odds are that you’re not. Don’t let the prospect petrify you. True homosexuals *know* they are fundamentally different.

Sometimes people can have a homosexual experience and agonize about their sexuality as a result. Dr. G. Keith Olson, a Christian marriage and family counselor, wrote, “Many young people experiment with sex in a variety of ways, often homosexual.... One experimental event during puberty certainly doesn’t mean you’re gay.”³

Moreover, an absence of sexual attraction for the opposite sex doesn’t make you a homosexual. You may simply not have strong sexual desires. Perhaps, as does happen, only one person can “light your fire.” Consider yourself blessed if that person becomes your partner in marriage.

B. Homosexuals are not by nature necessarily child molesters or promiscuous. Homosexuals can be trusted around children when one uses the same caution one takes with heterosexuals, especially males. And like heterosexuals, homosexuals are not attracted indiscriminately to every person of their sex.

Homosexuals are found in all walks of life. Many are respected teachers, doctors, farmers, lawyers, nurses, mechanics, secretaries, and city planners. Many are or have been married.

Homosexuals can be genuine, model Christians, exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit (see Galatians 5).

5. Changing one’s homosexual orientation is apparently difficult and rare. This understanding should in no way undermine hope for realistic changes. The realm of homosexual “change ministries” such as Exodus International and peoplecanchange.com is riddled with claims and counterclaims. Detractors of the ex-gay movement contend that far more ex-ex-gays than ex-gays exist, that it’s only a matter of time before homosexuals abandon their efforts to change their homosexuality.

Few in homosexual change ministries claim that curing homosexual orientation is the norm. Even using the term *cured*—as though finding relief from a cold—is not encouraged. Instead, the words often mentioned are *process, growth, becoming, discipling, and gradual*.

Perhaps a profound difference exists between curing and healing. Healing is often a fresh pathway, an altered trajectory, not an instant deliverance. For people with a homosexual orientation, it isn’t a matter of “just control yourself” until you’re “heterosexualized.”

Think of it this way: How long would it take for you to “just control yourself” before you became “homosexualized”? Going the other way probably isn’t much easier.

6. Being a homosexual is not a sin. Our church doesn’t regard the *condition* of homosexuality to be a sin for which one must give an accounting to God. As the book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .* states, “Scripture condemns homosexual practices in strongly negative terms (Gen. 19:4–10; cf. Jude 7, 8; Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26–28; 1 Tim. 1:8–10). Practices of this type produce a serious distortion of the image of God in men and women.”⁴ Note the explicit references to “practices.”

The church’s distinction between condition and practices underscores

our understanding of the difference between *being* a homosexual and *practicing* homosexuality. A person is not a contemptible pervert for being a homosexual any more than we are all perverted and retarded compared to the Creator's original design.

Some have said that being a homosexual is a sin because it is "unnatural." They imply that what is natural is good, and what is not natural is not good. Yet homosexuals claim they have felt "natural" sexual feelings toward the same sex all their lives. Furthermore, if claims for a biological origin of homosexuality turn out to be true, some would argue this proves the condition is natural.

However, *natural* doesn't necessarily mean good. As Richard Lovelace wrote in his book *Homosexuality and the Church*, "An appeal to nature proves nothing in a fallen world." By the same token, *unnatural* doesn't necessarily mean bad, as evidenced by eyeglasses, airplanes and pasta.

7. There is no scriptural support for practicing homosexuality. As

Attention, Adventist Professionals

If you hold a degree in any field and have an email address, we encourage you to join the Adventist Professionals' Network (APN). Sponsored by the Adventist Church, this global electronic registry assists participant institutions and agencies in locating consultants with expertise, volunteers for mission assignments, and candidates for positions in teaching, administration, or research. Enter your professional information directly in the APN website:

<http://apn.adventist.org>

Encourage other Adventist professionals to register!

Seventh-day Adventists, we believe the Bible to be God's thoughts communicated in human language. All of the sexual relations that the Bible obviously condones are heterosexual sexual relations. (See Genesis 2; Song of Solomon; Ephesians 5.) Other texts condemn homosexual sexual acts. (See specifically Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:24–27. Other passages that may do so as well include 1 Corinthians 6:9–11; 1 Timothy 1:8–11; and Jude 7.)

We should note that some theologians find these last texts to be obscure, and they maintain that the Leviticus and Romans texts refer to the *abuse* of homosexuality—to homosexual promiscuity, rape, or prostitution and not to consensual homosexual sexual relations. They point out that biblical condemnations against similar heterosexual acts are even more plentiful, and they conclude that simplistic readings of a few scriptural references do not determine God's will for homosexual persons today. These scholars also do not (without resorting to strained speculations) find in the Bible license or praise for or even one word of counsel on homosexual relationships.

8. The problem won't just go away. Whether people suffer silently with it, ignore it, or rant against it, the question of homosexuality remains. For Episcopalians, Presbyterians, United Methodists, and other Christian denominations, the issue has reached epic proportions.

It's been a difficult issue for Seventh-day Adventists, too. The issue doesn't just "go away" because we want it to, because people don't just "go away." Even if they leave our congregations, people are still here, still needing the fellowship of the Spirit, still longing for unconditional love, still connected by invisible threads to Christ's body.

Healing

Healing is called for. Though ultimately incomplete, comparisons to other life conditions can give insight to

healing approaches.

Analogy A. Although the homosexual community dislikes the analogy,⁵ alcoholism exhibits some resemblance to homosexuality in that it remains a lifelong characteristic apart from behavior. As many understand it, a true alcoholic is never *cured*. The predisposition is always intact; the temptation remains. But through programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous, alcoholics by the millions have been healed.

Analogy B. Some view homosexuality as a type of handicap. Being handicapped is not a sin, as Jesus showed magnificently in John, chapter 9. Jesus doesn't cure all disabilities today. He does heal today—mentally, emotionally, and spiritually—even when a physical cure isn't evident.

Q: So how do I treat a handicapped person?

A: As a person. And realize that the expression "a deaf person" is worse than "a person who is deaf." Why focus on only one trait? How would you like to be referred to only by your most unusual trait?

An alternative perspective considers homosexuality neither as a sickness such as alcoholism nor as a handicap such as blindness but as an eccentricity such as left-handedness.

Analogy C. The sexual condition of homosexuals can be compared to that of singles. Whether never married, divorced, or widowed, Christian singles are to remain celibate, abstaining from sexual intercourse.

For many in the Christian community, the big debate resides here. Paul referred to celibacy as a gift: "I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his particular gift from God, one having one kind and another a different kind. To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain unmarried as I am" (1 Corinthians 7:7, 8, NRSV). Has God given the gift of celibacy to all homosexuals?

It may sound smug and self-serving for me, a married heterosexual, to state

that homosexuals should stay celibate, but we advocate precisely the same state for singles. As is the case with singles, this is different from advocating a life of loneliness or aloneness. And not all singles have a *choice* in becoming happily married.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church can reach out in practical, innovative ways to help homosexuals. Task forces, seminars, brochures, and streamlined referral services to responsible support ministries are a start. Adventist churches and church members ideally should be the first place homosexuals want to go to, not the last.

An official Adventist conference on homosexuality was held January 12-15, 2006, in Ontario, California, U.S.A. Titled "Christian Attitudes Toward Homosexuality: Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives," about 60 selected delegates attended, including church leaders from the General Conference, six colleges, and several publications. Papers were presented, updated research was shared, and an open, questioning, redemptive spirit was evident.

Topics by the 13 presenters included "Homosexuality and Seventh-day Adventist Families," "Interaction and Angst: The Social Experiences of Gay and Lesbian Seventh-day Adventists," and "The Caring, Welcoming Church?: The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Its Homosexual Members." These papers, along with solicited responses, are scheduled to be published as a book. The long-awaited time to address the issues surrounding homosexuals is here.

Conclusion

I didn't want to write this piece. For a long time, I put it off. I don't intend to become *the* spokesperson for homosexuals; for me this is not an all-consuming platform. I'm telling you this because (probably like you) I wasn't naturally drawn to this topic, but I heard too many desperate, heart-breaking cries in the wilderness of our

church to ignore them.

It is our duty—mine and yours—to alleviate suffering and to generate awareness, spawn understanding, and foster healing where we can, even when we are not "naturally drawn" to do so. To encourage, uphold, and point to our all-sufficient King when others are fearful is also more than our Christian duty—it is our joy.

Homosexuals can be members in good and regular standing of any Seventh-day Adventist church. They can hold church offices: If an alcoholic who doesn't drink alcohol can hold any church office, a homosexual who doesn't practice homosexuality can hold any church office.

Did we go too far? Please consider this: Susceptibility is not a valid reason for exclusion. Imagine what would happen if all who are susceptible to the sin of pride—the first sin, the worst sin—were excluded from the ordained ministry. How many pastors would be out of their profession?

My fervent hope and prayer is that our church accept people with homosexual tendencies into our midst, that we will be known truly as Christ's disciples: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35, NRSV).

Finally, if Jesus hung around with prostitutes, lepers, and tax collectors, would He hang around with homosexuals? With lesbians, gays, and queers?

You know the answer as well as I do. Yes, He would.

And yes, He does.

This article is condensed and excerpted from *Swimming Against the Current: Living for the God You Love* by Chris Blake (Pacific Press, 2007). Chris Blake is an associate professor of English and communications at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, U.S.A.

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2. Tineke Bodde, "Why Is My Child Gay?" a booklet published by the Federation of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Inc.
3. From G. Keith Olson, "I Think I'm Gay!" *Group Members Only*, January 1986.
4. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...* (Silver Spring, Maryland: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), p. 338.
5. They do not see homosexuality as a sickness, which is how alcoholism is often seen.

Cristología:

Continued from page 23

ments which are far from being theological, such as a study of Drs. W. D. Edwards, W. G. Gabel, and F. E. Hosmer on a medical analysis of the death of Jesus, with useful drawings (pp. 47-52), some references to Mel Gibson's film *The Passion* (pp. 49, 136), and a few short comments on Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* (pp. 82, 144).

Over all, the book is a useful introduction to a difficult but important subject.

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ACTION REPORT

Where hope happens

“It’s the simplest things that make the biggest impact.” I heard that many years ago from Don Noble, president of Maranatha Volunteers International. Way back then I had no idea what he meant, but each time I participate in a Maranatha project I re-learn the truth of his insight.

For nearly 30 years Maranatha has responded when the church called for buildings. That response has often included volunteer teams from around the world going to the location and laying brick. At other times Maranatha has hired local crews to do the work using money contributed from supporters. Always, the response is tuned to match the call from the local Adventist denominational leaders.

“Our church is growing so rapidly,” says Pastor Paul Ratsara, president of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean

Division, “that there is no way we can keep up with the needs for church and school buildings. Maranatha has been sent by God to help care for the growth of our congregations!”

“Pastor Ratsara told us that they need 10,000 church buildings,” remembers Don Noble, “and then asked how soon we could get that done!” Meeting the building need in this division alone will take thousands of volunteers and millions of dollars, but Maranatha has heard the call!

Moving ahead with far more faith than funds, Maranatha has placed a crew in Mozambique and began the first of 1,001 new buildings for the country. These buildings are designed to be used as schools, churches and clinics—which means they will be the center of community life in each village. Along with each church, the denomination is providing pastoral and teacher support to guide “Kingdom Growth” in the community.

Stepping out to do the impossible is nothing new for Maranatha. Their construction projects include more than 1,400 new Seventh-day Adventist church buildings in India, along with two large school campuses. The school for the blind in Bobbli was built to meet the needs of more than 200 students. Another project in Jeypore will provide facilities to educate nearly 1,000 students from the hill tribes of Orissa.

Recently, while participating in a Maranatha construction trip to India, I stood just inside a mobile clinic and watched patients come—an endless line of them filing toward hope. Each morning mini-vans transported teams to three different villages. Doctors and nurses rode beside university students, translators, pastors, and pharmacists, each imagining the medical chal-

lenges that might walk into their lives that day. Our volunteers, including Maranatha, Amazing Facts, and the medical experts of AMEN, listened to their voices and their hearts, and were often able to provide solutions to their health needs.

Maranatha spreads hope throughout the world. The need for volunteers is overwhelming. Current projects include working with communities to build schools, clinics, and churches in Norway, India, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Mozambique and the U.S.A. For more information on their work and to register as a participant, please visit www.maranatha.org

Dick Duerksen is assistant to the president of Maranatha Volunteers International.

Photos ©2007 Dick Duerksen



Anke Smit, college graduate from Pretoria on Maranatha volunteer trip from South Africa to Mozambique.



Physicians from AMEN joined with students from the U.S.A. and India on this Maranatha trip.



Colegio Adventista del Ecuador project, preparing for 600 students.

OPEN FORUM

Drink a little wine?

My friends and I have been studying the subject of wine in the Bible and are a bit confused. In many passages the Scriptures condemn the consumption of wine because of its harmful effects. Yet Paul advised Timothy to “use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses” (1 Timothy 5:23, NIV). How should we understand this text?

In antiquity some customs—such as polygamy and slave ownership—were tolerated among God’s people, at least for a time. That certainly does not excuse continuing them today. Many passages mentioning wine in the Bible warn against its use. However, there was also some justification for a restricted use of fermented grape juice in past times. Ancient peoples did not know the technique for sterile preservation. The only way they knew to preserve grape juice, other than fermentation, was through syrups, which altered its taste and food value. Since grapes were one of the few products that could be grown in the semi-arid regions of Bible lands, there was great need for preserving grape juice. Fermented wine was a practical solution.

However, wine-making is quite tricky. The general principle is that grape juice, a sugary liquid, may be fermented through the action of yeasts

found naturally on the grape peel. Up to 12 percent of alcohol, by volume, may be generated in the process. Any excess sugar remains untransformed, and yields “sweet” wine. Less sugary must yield “dry” wine, which was avoided in antiquity. The reason is that alcoholic liquids, such as wine, are liable to another kind of fermentation in which alcohol is transformed into acetic acid (vinegar). While some vinegar could be useful, you don’t want to see the whole crop of grapes going acetic. Today this is avoided by pasteurizing wine and bottling it carefully, a procedure the ancients did not know. Because of this, Greco-Roman wines were started with an extra-sweet juice, obtained by partially dehydrating grapes in the sun before pressing them. The excess sugar prevented acetic fermentation. This extra-sweet wine was so thick that one notes references in the classical literature to scraping the wine out of its containers before serving it.

Scraped or not, classical wine was always served at the table after mixing it with water in special punch bowls (*crateras*). In the Bible, “mixing” or “mingling” wine (Proverbs 9:2, KJV) means serving it (see Revelation 14:10 in literal translation). Normal dilution was one part wine in four to six parts of water, making a two to three percent alcohol mixture (non-alcoholic beer today has a tolerance of up to two percent alcohol). A pint at the table would have as much alcohol as half a glass of common wine today.

This background illuminates the passage of 1 Timothy 5:23. The advice of Paul was not to drink water alone, “but use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.” Ancient people’s drinking

water was very unsafe. Few had access to spring water. Most people drank stagnant rainwater collected from their own roofs in cisterns (Proverbs 5:15) where bacteria easily multiplied. This produced “frequent ailments” in the “stomach” or belly—dysentery. However, the addition of a “little wine,” such as thick classical sweet wine, to table water was enough to kill the bacteria. The passage presupposes that Timothy had been instructed to avoid wine, and would have been willing to suffer frequent bouts of diarrhea in order to be faithful to such counsel, were it not for the timely permission given by Paul. But just as the modern conscience will not tolerate slave ownership or polygamy, the fact that in the past alcohol was used as an antiseptic in order to render table water drinkable can hardly be used to excuse its consumption today. The avoidance of alcohol implied in this passage shows that, if wine is to be consumed by Christians, it has to be the “unfermented juice of the grape” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, September 6, 1899).

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FIRST PERSON

God's wonderful providence

by Alberto Soriano

Born in an Adventist home, I learned early in childhood some basic essentials of life. My parents were my first teachers, and they taught both in words and through their model lives. I learned to love and obey God, regardless of the consequences. Later, in an Adventist academy, these early lessons were reinforced by model teachers. During the obligatory military service, my biblical convictions regarding Sabbath observance were tested, but God always helped me find a solution.

After secondary school, I enrolled in a public university in northern Argentina to pursue a degree in veterinary science, which involved five years of study. I sailed through my first two years without any courses being taught on the Sabbath. As I began the third year, the class schedule for one course conflicted with my Sabbath conviction, but I was able to work this one out, and I moved on with wings to complete my professional goal.

Come fourth-year, I had the option of taking one course on Tuesdays or Saturdays. But at enrollment time I learned, to my utter disappointment, that the Tuesday track had been cancelled. I asked God why He allowed this to happen! I spoke with the academic authorities and the senior lecturer, explaining my reasons for not attending classes on Saturdays and requesting an exemption. In the meantime I continued taking other courses. The official answer to my puzzle came near the end of the academic year: I could take all the tests, exams, labs, and the final exam at once ... in just three hours. I sensed that neither the teacher nor the university administra-

tion wanted to help me. Although I prepared well and wrote feverishly, I could not cover all the topics in the time allotted.

By then I was married and was facing a difficult dilemma. I could abandon my career, having completed practically four-fifths of the courses, or I could try again to take the exam of the class still pending. With much prayer and trepidation, I faced the challenge, but failed. It was evident that the lecturer and his assistants did not want to set a precedent that this core course requirement could be challenged without attending classes and labs.

What I did not know at that difficult time in my life was that God was about to find an unexpected and providential solution to my predicament.

Since my grades had been good in all the other courses, I applied and was granted the opportunity to enroll as a conditional student in the fifth and final year of my program. It was expected that by the middle of the year I would take and pass the exam for the pending fourth-year course. At that point I would be reinstated to regular status. I spent time trying to establish a cordial relationship with the main lecturer and his teaching assistants for that course. Their reaction, however, was very cold and uncaring—they saw me as a difficult student with strange religious ideas.

Suddenly, one month before the examination date, I noticed a remarkable change in attitude. They became friendly and with a smile answered the questions I posed on the format and scope of the examination. I knew that the members of several Adventist

churches in the area had been praying for me. Yet, I was unable to fully understand the new cordiality of the lecturer and his assistants.

I came to the examination trusting in God. I took the written part, then the laboratory section, and finally faced the oral exam, which was shorter than expected. The head of the examination committee told me, "You know the subject well. Please wait outside." A moment later I was handed the university identity booklet with the course on Farm Animals marked "Approved." Praise God! Then another member of the committee asked me to see him later, because he wanted to tell me something important.

This is what he told me.

One early Saturday morning, a few weeks before my exam, Dr. Eloy Caos—the senior lecturer—began driving his car to meet an appointment in the southern part of the province. Near the halfway point of his itinerary, the car began malfunctioning and then stopped at the city of Bella Vista. Dr. Caos inquired about a good service garage and was told that the best mechanic in town closed his shop on Saturdays, but lived next to the garage. The professor followed the instructions, came to the house, and found the mechanic well dressed and about to go out with his family. To the lecturer's surprise, the mechanic returned to the house, changed his clothes, and quickly fixed the problem. When Dr. Caos asked him how much he owed for the special service, the mechanic gave him a response that kept the lecturer thinking during the rest of his trip—"You owe me nothing." Then added, "I am a Seventh-day Adventist and was just going to church with my family. You needed assistance, and I was glad to help. Make sure to get a new part for your car on Monday."

The teaching assistant then told me that when the senior professor came back to the university, he described

Continued on page 35

CAMPUS LIFE

Sharing your faith with a Jewish friend

by Mark A. Kellner

The world population of Jews is estimated to be around 13.1 to 14 million. Unlike Seventh-day Adventists, who hold common a set of fundamental beliefs, Jews range from atheistic to ultra-Orthodox. There's virtually no "standard" approach to Judaism as a religion these days. That is to say, there's no "one-size-fits-all" approach to evangelism among Jews.

In fact, I, a Jewish believer in Jesus and a Seventh-day Adventist, would not suggest using the word *evangelism* outright, or the concept of "winning" another Jewish person to faith in Christ. Those words are so emotionally charged for many Jews that they might obscure the basic, unchanging message: People, even Jewish people, need the Lord Jesus Christ.

No one "Judaism"

In post-Diaspora Jewish life (*Diaspora* is the traditional word for the exile of Jewish people from Israel after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70) there is no single form of Judaism that would be easily recognized by all Jews. Jewish thought and practice ranges from ultra-ultra-liberal to ultra-ultra-conservative and beyond. In some Jewish circles, one can be agnostic or even atheistic and remain a Jew, so long as one "identifies" with the Jewish people. To the most orthodox, unless you worship in their fashion and acknowledge their interpretations, your Judaism may be suspect.

Who is a Jew? Traditionally, one who is born of a Jewish mother. Today, some Jewish groups and even Israel's law of return are more liberal in their definition: someone with one Jewish

grandparent and who hasn't professed another faith is considered Jewish enough to qualify for immigration to Israel. The non-profession clause was added in the 1980s after Jewish believers in Jesus tried to immigrate to Israel, claiming the right to return.

My definition is simpler: If you say you're a Jew, I'll consider you one. Jewishness is not necessarily coveted in many places. Imagine living as a Jew in a country where militant Moslems hold power today. Someone willing to identify as a Jew, then, deserves that privilege. However, it's wise to know that there are variations. A highly orthodox Jew, who is often said to be a member of a Hasidic sect such as the Lubavitchers or the Satmars (names of towns in eastern Europe where these groups originated), will not, for example, associate with a woman outside of his immediate family. Thus, if you're a young lady who meets a Hasidic man at a college, you likely will not have a chance to witness to him. A young man might have a better chance. The reverse, as you might guess, holds for those Hasidic women, few though they may be, who go outside the community for higher education.

Among more theologically liberal Jewish groups—"conservative," "reform" and "reconstructionist" in ascending order of theological flexibility—you will find fewer gender restrictions, and lessening emphasis on Jewish traditions and even dietary rules. Many in these groups are more open to theological concepts than their orthodox and Hasidic brethren.

Orthodox Judaism is chiefly an American distinction for those groups

more conservative than the "conservatives," but whose members are willing to engage with and in modern society, unlike some of the Hasidim whose interactions with the "modern world" are often limited. Many orthodox Jews will go to secular institutions of higher learning, engage in all sorts of occupations, and have cordial work relationships with colleagues of both genders and all religions. One prominent example of an Orthodox Jew, engaged in the modern world, is United States Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut. He is a Sabbath-keeper and an observant Jew.

As you establish a relationship with Jewish people, it's a good idea to learn, as graciously as possible, where they fall within the spectrum of contemporary Judaism. The most "hardcore" will likely identify themselves as such, but others may be more difficult to figure out. Of course, if someone responds to your questions about religion with disdain or dismissal, it's relatively safe to assume that he or she is not highly religious!

What Jews look for

I haven't done a scientific study, but from speaking with many Jewish believers over the years and reading the testimonies of others, I believe that each Jew who comes to faith in Christ is seeking to fill a heart need.

Isaac Kleimans, who lives about an hour southwest of Riga, Latvia, was very much like that. During World War II, young Isaac was separated from the rest of his Jewish family, and hid in the home of two sisters who happened to be Seventh-day Adventists. Their love and sacrifice made an impression on him; he attended Adventist worship when possible, and read the Bible as well as Adventist publications. After the war, he joined the church and eventually became a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, serving for more than 50 years.

Isaac was searching for inner peace during that time of tumult. The Nazis

and their allies killed the rest of his family. Knowing Jesus gave him peace and assurance during the most difficult time of his life.

Such needs are common to many Jewish people today. However successful or affluent a person may be, he or she still has to deal with the “big questions” of life: Who am I? Why am I here? What will happen after I die? Is there a just God in the universe?

The Seventh-day Adventist message has unique and helpful answers to these questions. And there’s something more: the Sabbath. Even Jews who do not observe the Sabbath regularly, let alone “religiously,” will often be quick to acknowledge an old truism: “The Sabbath has kept the Jews as much as the Jews have kept the Sabbath through the years.” Unlike any other mainstream Protestant church, we don’t ask Jews to give up the symbol of their people-hood, the Sabbath. Instead, we celebrate it, delight in it, and proclaim it because it was instituted by the Creator and affirmed by Jesus Christ Himself!

Another clear advantage is our understanding of the health message, which includes a delineation of clean and unclean foods as outlined in the Scriptures. This, too, will appeal to the observant Jew who is considering the claims of Christ. Too often, albeit in parody, a Jew converting to Christianity is seen as being obliged to have a ham sandwich and a glass of milk to help “seal the deal.” Adventism makes no such demands. This is another plus for us in sharing the gospel, but not necessarily one to trumpet as you sally forth.

Tips for sharing

As mentioned above, the key is to ascertain where your friend may be theologically and what his or her heart needs are. Jews are, I believe, blessed by God and the “Chosen People” sobriquet is one many Jews are proud to bear, though others, looking back at persecutions, have wished God had

“chosen” another group! But regardless of history and theology, Jews today need to answer those fundamental questions as much as anyone else. By learning what their needs are, you can reach out with the gospel message in the most effective manner.

Those wondering about justice and fairness will be glad to know that at the end of the Great Controversy now engulfing the universe not only does God win, but He also explains His justice for all—even Satan—to understand and affirm. Those curious about the afterlife will be glad to know that a beloved relative isn’t “roasting and toasting” in eternal torment, nor shall anyone’s punishment be without conclusion. Indeed, our understanding of the sanctuary and the pre-advent judgment should lead us to the conclusion that Jesus—Himself born of the Jewish race and faith—is seeking ways to *include* as many as possible in the kingdom.

Furthermore, the Advent message of service to others, worship of God, and the creation of strong families should resonate with those Jews who are wondering what the purpose of life is, and who they “really” are. Many Jews have adopted *tikkun olam*, a Hebrew phrase that translates to “repairing the world,” as their reason for pursuing social justice. With this concept of justice, Adventism’s work in defense of religious liberty and humanitarian ministry through ADRA tie in well.

But what about Jesus?

The most difficult concept for many Jews to accept is not only that God had a Son, but that this Son is also God, as is the *Ruach HaKodesh*, or God the Holy Spirit. Orthodox Jews may accuse you of polytheism, claiming that Christians worship “three Gods.” Here, a thorough understanding of the Trinity will help your Jewish friends to understand this important concept.

Another question that troubles Jews is: If Jesus was the Messiah, why

didn’t He usher in the Messianic Age? The answer is simple and needs to be gently conveyed. God chose to operate differently, to first come and die for the sins of all, and then give the world a chance to repent before returning in judgment. That’s not bad news—no golden era—but good news of the best kind: We have the chance to choose righteousness and salvation.

Look at it this way: Jesus was a Jew. His disciples were Jews, as were His “biographers,” except for Luke. Rabbi Saul of Tarsus, known to us as Paul, advertised himself as a “Pharisee of the Pharisees,” a Jew whose zeal for truth was great. All these Jews observed Jewish customs, kept the Bible Sabbath, and revered the Hebrew Scriptures. They worshiped in the synagogues and at the Temple. The disciples longed for the Jewish Messiah, whom they believed Jesus to be. And, in the early church days, they maintained these positions.

If this isn’t a “Jewish” faith, then I don’t know what is! Jesus and His first followers were not opposed to genuine Judaism. They wished to refine, enhance, and expand Jewish practice with a greater understanding of God’s plans, thus meeting the deepest needs of people everywhere. This, I would submit, is something you can utilize in sharing your faith with Jewish friends. If there is any frustration in the world today, it’s over religion that isn’t effective. Adventist Christianity, with its endorsement of the Sabbath and reliance on Jesus as the best hope for humanity, is a viable alternative, and one you can confidently bring to Jewish people as a way to realize their deepest yearnings and aspirations.

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When faith...

Continued from page 8

Faith and reason: living with the tension

Having reached this understanding of the tension between faith and reason, what is a proper response from ourselves personally, and what can we do for those who look to us for help in dealing with the issues?⁷

First, we can contribute toward a better understanding of the nature and limitations of science. The success of technology and experimental science is so great that many are greatly influenced by the pronouncements of scientists even in areas outside of science. The differences between experimental and historical science should be explained. The difficulties of dealing with singularities and questions of origins may not be obvious to the untrained, but they are crucial to understanding why science can be so successful in some areas and so incomplete and speculative in other areas. Figure 1 presents a scheme that might be helpful in doing this.

Second, we can share the realization that proof of our beliefs is not possible. We cannot prove anything without assumptions, and our assumptions determine what we are able to prove. It is only when assumptions are shared that one can prove a point to another. Secularists often make assumptions that are incompatible with the assumptions of Christians. It is no surprise that conflicts remain unresolved. We can never prove Creation to be true nor can we use arguments based on naturalistic science to prove evolution false, although we can certainly show that it has problems. We must learn to be comfortable living without proof, while continuing to seek a deeper understanding of truth.

Third, we can help in developing critical thinking. We should encourage others to be cautious about the claims they hear, and to learn to distinguish

between data and interpretations, and between good arguments and bad ones. Believers in Creation seem prone to accept bad arguments. For example, creationists once claimed that dinosaur and human footprints were found mixed together in the limestone bed of the Paluxy River of Texas. This claim has been repeated hundreds of times even though the original claimants have retracted their claims.

Another bad claim is that the Earth cannot be very old because the human population has been expanding too fast. It would take only a few thousand years to produce the number of people now living. Human population could not expand at its modern rate until the development of agriculture, the invention of writing, the production of metals, and improvements in health care and mechanization. These inventions provided means of supporting larger populations and expanded the carrying capacity of the environment for humans. Without these and other inventions, North America might still have a population of only a few million, as it did 500 years ago.⁸

Evolutionists also make bad arguments. For example, sometimes they claim that Noah's ark story could not possibly be true because it would have to hold all the species known today, including millions of kinds of insects. But creationists do not believe this. The ark was built for terrestrial vertebrates, and diversification has occurred since the Flood.

Fourth, we can let others see us model an attitude of faith even with the knowledge of the difficulties encountered in the integration of faith and reason. Our faith need not be unsettled by the realization that there are questions for which we cannot provide empirical answers. We can take courage from others who are well aware of the problems and have made a conscious decision to accept the biblical record as an act of faith. Faith is not opposed to reason, but is chosen through an act of reason.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we should develop the ability to think and act from a Christian perspective generally, and from a creation perspective specifically. This requires mental discipline and alertness to recognize the implications of various ideas and the need for reinterpretation. It also requires recognition of the difference between data and interpretation, and the need to start with careful collection or review of the data, critical analysis, and collaboration with colleagues in order to develop interpretations based on Christian assumptions.

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FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Overcoming the Internet temptations

As Christians, we often face difficult decisions. That is one of the reasons why God gave us His Word, the Bible. There we can find principles to guide us in using technological innovations without letting them control us or lead us astray.

The Internet is a tool. God has allowed it to be designed so that, with the help of computers, we are able to communicate, learn, entertain ourselves in a wholesome way, and support His mission around the world.

You probably know more than your parents about technology. As a result, you have an even greater personal responsibility to use it in a way that will not damage your mind, body, or relationships.

In his first letter to the Christians in Corinth, the apostle Paul wrote, “Everything is permissible for me—but not everything is beneficial. ‘Everything is permissible for me’—but I will not be mastered by anything” (1 Corinthians 6:12, NIV). At the time when Paul wrote these words, Corinth was for believers pretty much like the Internet is to us, modern-day Christians. Within the city limits of Corinth, you could find many places to visit—some decent, some outstanding, and some really awful.

There were areas in Corinth that you could enter safely without being accosted by peddlers offering you harmful merchandise—like on the Internet. You can visit sites that are safe and where no one will entice you with risky propositions.

Corinth was a progressive city, with schools and even a university. Paul didn’t tell Christians to stay away from centers of learning, but advised them

not to allow wrong ideas to dominate their thinking. The Internet provides access to vast sources of information, which can be used for many research projects. However, it is unfiltered and unverified. You must select sources with care and discern their validity. You also need to be honest when using material that has been prepared by others, showing respect for the work they have put into researching and writing.

If you walked to school in Corinth, it was possible to pass by buildings where questionable or immoral activities took place. Today, when you do an Internet search, it is possible that something corrupt or immoral will pop up on your screen. You need to ask God to help you to resist the temptation to explore sites that will harm you.

Corinth also had some of the best bath houses of antiquity. Both old and young went there “to have a good time.” In fact, they were barely disguised houses of immorality and prostitution, with the added advantage of privacy.

One of the characteristics of the Internet is its privacy. You can be alone and access immoral websites without anyone knowing, but such an exercise will cause you great harm. You will receive intriguing invitations to visit certain mysterious sites or others that make bold offers of free pornography. In order to better resist the temptation of going to these perverted sites, don’t keep your computer in a secluded place. Set it up in a public location where others can see what you have on the screen. You can also install electronic filters to keep those temptations

from reaching your computer. Even better, ask God to place those filters in your heart and to build a firewall around your will. Paste a short note on your computer, reminding you not to pollute your mind with materials that dishonor Him. (See Psalms 32:8; 101:3; 119:37; Proverbs 23:26.) Remember that you can delete pornographic images from your email or your computer hard drive, but your mind doesn’t have a “delete” key. What enters will remain there for a very long time.

In Corinth, there were public squares where people came to talk about many subjects. The group discussions were lively and at times fascinating. So Paul knew something about chats. Chat rooms may be one of your favorite places online. You can enter these virtual spaces and simply observe what’s going on or participate while concealing your true identity. Nobody knows what you read or wrote. But your friend Jesus is next to you when you participate in these electronic exchanges. Are you honoring Him in your communications?

Some young women get hooked on chatting by Internet with young men their age who claim to be great at sports, to have money, and to travel around the world. They may even receive a photo of their handsome new friend. However, due to the nature of chat rooms, such a “friend” may in reality be an overweight 50-year-old man who is lousy at sports, has never traveled outside his neighborhood, is socially maladjusted, and has questionable or even dangerous intentions for the relationship.

Wake up! Your life is too valuable to run these risks. If you are struggling with Internet temptations or perhaps with a tendency to spend too much time playing computer games, ask God for help to protect your mind and your emotions, and to use your time wisely. He will help you.

Remember the wise counsel of Paul. You are free to visit any place in modern Corinth, but not all are beneficial. In fact, you run the risk of being manipulated by images and mastered by temptations that will ruin your life. Be careful!

Adapted from a release by Agencia Orbita.

God's wonderful...

Continued from page 30

the incident and said that during the weekend he had learned much about the kind of people Sabbath-keeping Christians are.

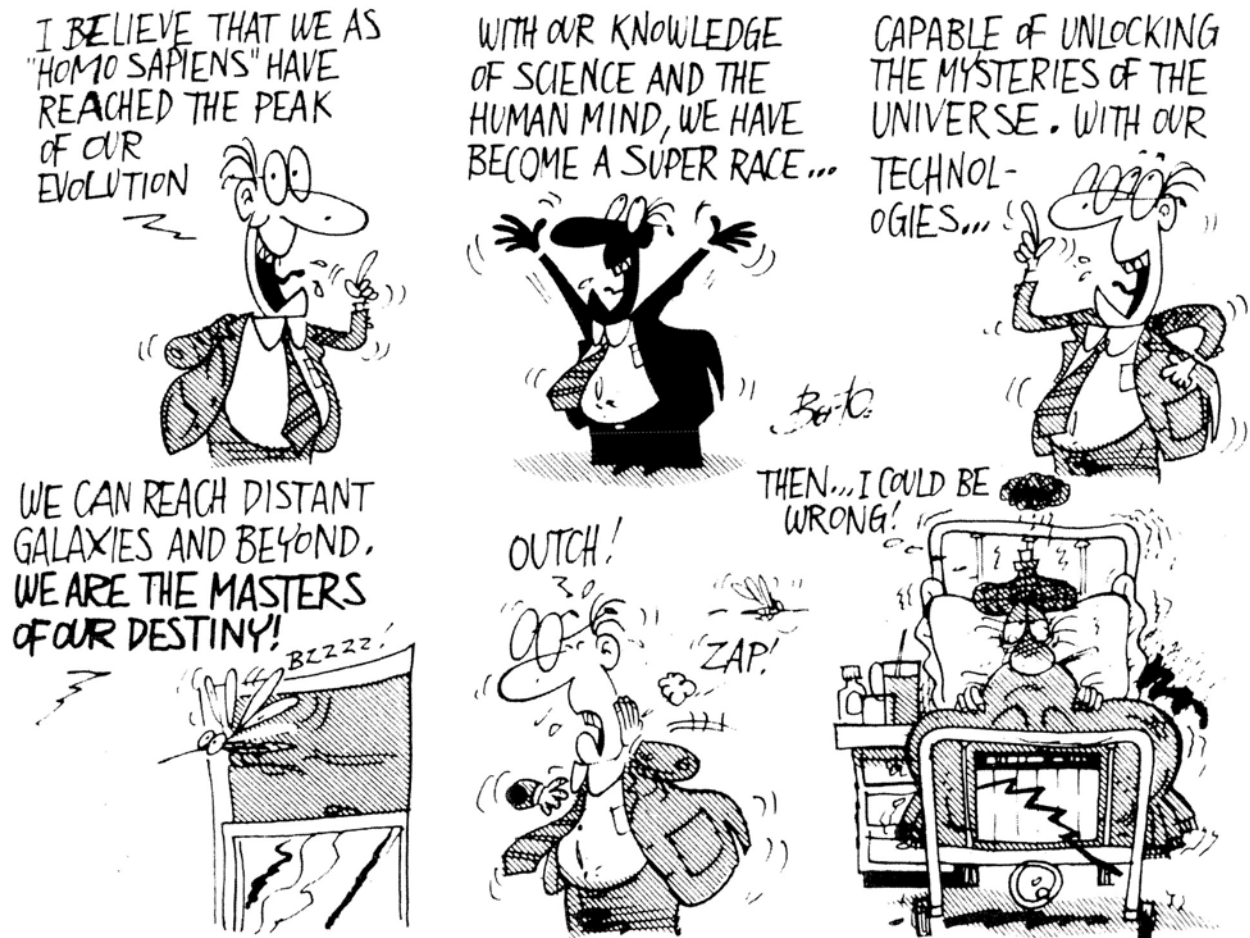
So, in God's wonderful providence, I was able to complete my studies,

obtain my degree, and start my profession as a veterinarian. I now reside in the province of La Pampa, in central Argentina, and am the first elder of a new Adventist congregation. My wife is the church secretary, and our daughters lead out in the children and youth departments.

God is faithful.

ET CETERA

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A Jordi Baget Portfolio

All paintings, oil on canvas



“Barcelona Fishermen”
(130 x 97 cm). Unloading the catch requires quick action. I was attracted by the various movements of the figures, which are difficult to depict.



“Wheat Fields” (92 x 73 cm).
The Catalonia back country near the Pyrenees Mountains inspired many of my early paintings.



“The Pollença Church, Mallorca”
(60 x 73 cm). I spent several summers painting outdoors in Mallorca. Light and shadows play on the façade of this church under the afternoon sun.

“Valletta Harbor, Malta”
(92 x 73 cm). The intense
 Mediterranean sun strikes the water
 and the old buildings, which harbor
 memories of the island’s turbulent
 history.



“Still Life”
(65 x 54 cm). Painting a fresh
 bouquet of
 flowers always
 presents a
 challenge. This
 image includes
 the back of a
 chair I carved
 in my youth.

“Mending Nets” (54 x 65 cm).
 Before heading out, fishermen make
 sure their nets are ready for the catch.
 I have special sympathy for simple,
 hardworking people.



“Sport Vessels in Malta” (81 x 54 cm).
 Marinas provide a diversity of elements—water, boats, masts,
 canvas, background—that always stimulate my creativity.



“Torroja del Priorat” (92 x 65 cm).
 This ancient village in Catalonia hangs perilously from a
 rocky hill.



“Frias, Castille” (81 x 65 cm).
The autumn season begins in this town anchored in the rocks.

“Albarracín, Teruel” (61 x 50 cm). A bend of the road leads to this colorful town, which I painted in the open air.



“Skyscrapers” (100 x 73 cm). During the second half of my career I began experimenting with abstract themes, combining and contrasting colors, shapes, and textures.

“Budapest at Sunset” (81 x 60 cm). I first covered the canvas with a uniform brownish color and then applied many short brush strokes to create an impression. This is one of my favorite paintings.



“A Canal in Amsterdam” (92 x 73 cm).

The setting sun reflected on the waters brings together a slice of life. I sought to achieve maximum effect with a limited number of strokes.



“The Pollença Harbor” (54 x 45 cm). The island of Mallorca is a favorite anchorage for vessels from many countries.

“Market Day in Prague” (50 x 61 cm). I was enchanted by the city of Prague, its buildings, and its people. Here customers scramble under the rain, in an animated movement of life.

