

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

DIALOGUE

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**Experimenting
on humans**

**Hell: Eternal torment
or annihilation?**

**When the Earth's
crust explodes**

**The Bible:
How is it unique?**

**Understanding
Hinduism**

Volume 10
Number

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- North American Division:** Richard Osborn, José Rojas, and Richard Stenbakken. Address: 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600, U.S.A. E-mail: 74617,545 & 74617,760 & 74532,1614
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Editorial Correspondence:
12501 Old Columbia Pike;
Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600;
U.S.A.

Telephone: (301) 680-5060
Fax: (301) 622-9627
E-mail: 74617.464@compuserve.com or 104472.1154@compuserve.com

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Lorica Segmentata

L*orica Segmentata* is a specific type of Roman military armor used during the time of Christ. It protected the back, chest, and vital organs of the soldier against the death-dealing blows of the enemy. The armor was made of 24 to 34 separate pieces of metal, held together with straps, hinges, buckles, pins, and leather thongs. It was tough enough to stop sword thrusts and flexible enough to absorb heavy blows without shattering.

I became interested in Roman armor while making a Centurion's uniform to use in the process of first-person preaching—where the biblical account is told from the perspective of an actual scriptural character.

But, then, what does *Lorica Segmentata* has to do with AMiCUS? Much. Very much.

In many ways we, as individuals and as a body of believers, are like the *Lorica*. We work together to protect the vital elements of spiritual life while on campus. We are concerned with the “heart and lungs” of the freedom of religious exercise. We are concerned with the “heart and guts” of the staff, students, and institution, including such things as basic elements of ethics, order, fairness, and personal spiritual growth. By themselves, the individual pieces of the *Lorica* provide important but limited protection. In combination and unity, the pieces provide vital coverage to ensure the sustained well being of the Roman soldier who wore the armor. Unless the pieces are well connected and continually maintained, there could be tragic results.

Some individual pieces (of the *Lorica* and of AMiCUS) are more prominent and visible, but none are unimportant or immaterial. Each part, pin, buckle, or strap contributes its own uniquely vital function to the success of the whole.

When well maintained, polished, and publicly seen, there is a lasting, powerful impression of unity, precision and professionalism that makes an unmistakable statement: “We are not just for show. We are for real—the real business of supporting Seventh-day Adventist students and teachers in their spiritual warfare.” And, at a time of questioning spirituality, biblical belief, and authority (including divine authority), we need to pull together as never before.

That is us. We are *Lorica Segmentata*. Let's keep connected, polished, professional, and ready. We can't do less. After all, we are in the army of the Lord, working together to do His will, and commanded to “put on the whole armour of God” (Ephesians 6:11).



Richard O. Stenbakken, *Associate Editor*

Inspired by the journal

I am a first-year computer science student. A few days ago I discovered a copy of *Dialogue* in the library of Western Mindanao College. I learned much by reading the articles and especially the “Open Forum” section. Above all I was inspired to remain faithful to God and to share with others the gospel of Jesus Christ wherever I may be. Thank you!

Marven L. Buencamino

Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Jewish friends

My wife and I find the cover of *Dialogue* eye-catching and the content very informative and stimulating. I especially enjoyed the article “The Synagogue and the Church,” by Jacques B. Doukhan (8:2). My plan is to share copies of this article with my Jewish friends. Shalom!

William Finkelstein

Hanover Parish
JAMAICA

More orthodoxy?

I have been disappointed with the system of free distribution of *Dialogue* in our area. Sometimes the journal stops coming and then we receive two issues together. In addition, the number of copies that are sent to our church are barely enough for one-half of the university students interested in receiving it. For those reasons, I have decided to subscribe on my own, hoping that copies will reach me more regularly. Having stated my concern, *Dialogue* deserves congratulations for the quality of its content and for the broad selection of subjects it covers. Although at times I don't share the approach on a particular issue and would prefer more “orthodoxy” in the journal's emphasis, I am happy that in our church there is room where significant ideas can be freely discussed. You will also be interested to know that, with support from the con-

Letters

ference, we are likely to organize soon an Adventist student association in our city.

Ariel Sergio Gomez

Universidad de Buenos Aires
ARGENTINA.

“Interchange” works!

Some time ago I sent my name and address to be listed in “Interchange.” As a result, I have received several letters and postcards. Some were written by non-Adventist readers of *Dialogue* who asked questions about my beliefs and so we began a friendly exchange. Now I am writing to you again, just to express my appreciation for the interesting contacts that your journal allowed me to establish. I only wish that our mission would receive more copies of *Dialogue* to go around in our area! By the way, I will welcome additional contacts: Avenida Bolivar, Edificio “El Turpial,” Piso 1, Apto. 1-B, Maturin, Edo. Monagas, Venezuela.

Alejandra Gonzalez

VENEZUELA

Old but precious

About two years ago we saw the first copies of *Dialogue* in my country. They were old issues, but still precious to us. As we read them by turn in a broad circle, we were encouraged not only by the content but also by the possibility of establishing contacts with professionals in other parts of the world. I am a nurse in a local hospital and also the director of the club of Adventist professionals in my church. If a reader of this journal wishes to send us some back issues of *Dialogue* or write to us, we will be delighted. My address: Carretera La Fe #355, Isabel Rubio, Pinar del Rio, 24580 CUBA.

Abel Isaias Hernandez Z.

Isabel Rubio, Pinar del Rio
CUBA

I wish it were a monthly

As a 26-year-old Californian studying physiotherapy at the University of Sydney, I find *Dialogue* thoroughly enjoyable. I only wish it came monthly and that I had been introduced to it earlier! I welcome contacts in English with other readers. My interests are tennis, snow skiing, Bible study, gospel music, and mountain biking. My address: 34 Eden Dr., Asquith, Sydney, N.S.W. 2077, Australia. God bless your ministry!

Erik Lindgren

Sydney, AUSTRALIA
Moitalind@hotmail.com

Faulty logic?

In “Creation and a logical faith” (10:1), Ed Christian wrote, “I am assuming. . . that the Bible is the inspired word of God. . . doctrinally inerrant in the original autographs.” But does doctrinal inerrancy equal historical or scientific inerrancy?

Consider the following questions. When in history did God fight the great sea monster Rahab (Job 26:12, 13; Ps. 89:10; Isa. 51:9)? If there is a problem of interpretation here, who is the arbiter of this problem? Consider how the Bible-believing Reformers reacted to the ideas of Copernicus. Luther called him a “mad astrologer” and used Joshua 10:12, 13 to disprove him. Melancton used Eccl. 1:5, and Calvin relied on Ps. 93:1 in their commentary on Genesis. If they were misinterpreting Scripture, how could they know? And if we misuse Scripture, how should we know?

I have concluded the following. Just because someone else’s interpretation of Scripture differs from mine does not mean their logic is faulty. The situation usually is more complex. Some believe in Creation without accepting the literal week of Creation, and some accept the authority of Scripture without assuming its inerrancy. Jesus, Paul, James, and Peter counseled against judging others, and I think that includes their interpretation of Scripture. Or have I misinter-

preted their message?

Jim Miller

Madison, Wisconsin, U.S.A.
MillerJimE@aol.com

Ed Christian responds:

Yes, you have misinterpreted their message (see Matt. 7:15-20; 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:12-6:5; 2 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 3:10-11). If you really know people willing to “accept the authority” of which they believe may well be false, I may be able to get them a good discount on some counterfeit currency. If we claim to accept the Bible but believe it is false, we are fooling ourselves.

The texts you cite are mostly instances of misunderstood poetic language, but Genesis 1 is not poetry. Linguistically, the text allows only creation in six literal days. Jesus believed this. Can we believe in Him without believing what He says? Why believe in the Sabbath if it is a memorial of a six-day creation that never happened? If death did not enter the world through Adam’s fall, why believe in a Saviour from that death? To do so would be illogical.

No, “doctrinal inerrancy” does not necessarily “equal historical or scientific inerrancy.” What’s more, the Bible does not give all the facts about Creation. True science can teach us an immense amount about God’s handiwork. However, creation in six days is clear biblical teaching (i.e., doctrine), so the church considers it inerrant, and so do I. Be logical: “Go and do likewise.”

Write to us!

We welcome your comments, reactions and questions, but limit your letters to 200 words. Write to *Dialogue Letters*: 12501 Old Columbia Pike; Silver Spring, MD 20904; U.S.A. You can also use fax: (301) 622-9627, or E-mail: 74617.464@compuserve.com Letters selected for publication may be edited for clarity or space.

Experimenting on humans: A Christian perspective

By Beverly Rumble

How can Christians expand the horizons of science while living out their faith?

The term “human experimentation” conjures up mental images of horrifying experiments in Nazi concentration camps. In recent times, however, it includes a wide range of activities—from surveys to drug tests to behavioral studies. It is not uncommon for college and university students to use human subjects for research in medical, scientific, and psychological fields. Some countries and institutions strictly regulate such research, but others do not. However, Christians have an obligation to adhere to a higher standard of conduct as they seek to expand the horizons of science while living out their faith.

This obligation raises some significant issues: reasons for such research, moral cautions, choosing the subjects, designing the experiment, and guarding individual rights.

Why experiment on humans?

The history of research on human subjects has recorded many instances of serious violations of human rights—and not just under dictators. Early in this century, a future professor of tropical medicine at Harvard University injected plague germs into death-row inmates in the Philippines.¹ For 40 years, researchers on syphilis in Tuskegee, Alabama, withheld treatment from some 400 poor black men in order to study the physical effects of untreated venereal disease.² For 30 years after the end of World War II, the U.S. government conducted 31 experiments exposing 700 people to radioactive substances.³

Experiments by social scientists have been scarcely less questionable. For example, in one study researchers randomly assigned 80 undergraduates of

both sexes to watch various amounts of heterosexual pornography for a six-week period. The students were then asked to estimate the percentage of U.S. adults performing certain sexual acts, and to recommend a prison term for a rapist described in a newspaper article.⁴

In another study, researchers, posing as fellow believers, covertly studied a small flying saucer cult whose members were waiting for the end of the world. The ratio of researcher-believers to true-believers was so high, however, that their participation wronged those studied not only by lying to them but also by providing false “evidence” to reinforce their beliefs (while altering the phenomena under investigation).⁵

Why carry out such bizarre experiments?

One reason researchers give is that they seek to extend human knowledge and enhance human welfare. One ethicist suggests that such research seeks to avoid the “menace of avoidable ignorance.”⁶ In times of national emergency, such as war, research seems a patriotic imperative to deter enemy aggression and save one’s military personnel. Proponents of unfettered research may also argue that the end justifies the means, so individuals can be sacrificed for the good of the majority.

Researchers, especially in the social sciences, say they must use human subjects because they cannot achieve the same results with simulations or animals. They argue that freedom of inquiry is essential for optimal results.⁷ However, their “omnivorous appetite”⁸ for scientific research, as ethicist Paul Ramsey puts it, can cause researchers to overlook the importance of the individual.

Moral cautions

As Christians, we view the scientific method differently from those who hold a naturalistic philosophy about the origin of human beings. We believe that God designed the universe to operate in an orderly way, although He may occasionally work outside of natural processes in miraculous ways. Since God made us rational beings, we can design experiments to explore the mechanisms of the physical universe and human behavior, thus discovering some of the marvelous aspects of God's creation and extending the boundaries of knowledge and alleviating human suffering.

However, our beliefs will affect the kinds of scientific research that we choose to do. Human experimentation raises a number of religious and ethical dilemmas. Traditionally, such research occurred in the field of medicine, where the physician was supposed to be committed to the welfare of each patient. The primary rule was to do no harm—based on the Hippocratic Oath and guidelines for medical ethics drawn up by the General Assembly of the World Medical Association in response to the flagrant abuses by Nazi researchers.⁹

Christian ethics asserts that no human being—regardless of race or color, how well or poorly endowed with talents, or how primitive or developed—should be used merely as a means to achieve some research goal. Whatever responsibility human beings have to society, individuals are of supreme value, and society exists only to promote the good of its members.

"In view of people's tendency to exploit their fellow human beings, the scriptural revelation of the innate, inalienable dignity and value of the individual provides an indispensable bulwark of freedom and growth."¹⁰ Christ's example and teachings and the admonitions of biblical writers provide a basic framework for making decisions about how to treat people, both in daily life and in research.

Each human being is unique, created in the image of God and redeemed at an infinite price. He or she possesses the power to think and to do, according to Ellen White.¹¹ This means God places a high value on freedom of choice. This principle should influence researchers' choice of subjects and topics for investigation.

For the Christian researcher, stewardship becomes another moral imperative: The "Philosophy and Role of Research" statement of Montemorelos University, a Seventh-day Adventist institution of higher learning in Mexico, expresses well the demands of Christian stewardship in research: "A consciousness of our stewardship of God's creation prohibits the investment of time, ability, or economic resources in the search of knowledge that may result in adverse effects for human life, or that involve immoral elements or consequences. By the same token, this consciousness motivates us to the diligent research of all practical possibilities toward the common well-being of mankind."¹²

Choosing subjects

Given that research may require human subjects, how does the researcher choose them? Optimally, research involving human subjects should consist of a "truly joint venture between two human beings working together for the increase of human knowledge and the ability of human beings to serve one another. From this perspective, the subject is a coparticipant in the human quest for progress."¹³ This defines the subject's role as an active one, and requires the researcher to respect his or her humanity and rights as a freewill agent. Therefore, as Hans Jonas points out, the most highly motivated, the most highly educated, and the least captive members of human communities would make the best research subjects. Subjects with poorer knowledge, motivation, and decision-making freedoms (who may be more readily available and

easier to manipulate) should be used more sparingly and reluctantly.¹⁴ Curran suggests asking whether one would subject his or her own children to the proposed experiments.¹⁵

Research should treat individuals ethically. To say that means not only respecting individuals' decisions and protecting them from harm, but also actively trying to ensure their well-being. Two principles may help: "(1) do not harm, and (2) maximize possible benefits and minimize possible harms."¹⁶

Designing the experiment

Another important Christian concern in experimenting on humans has to do with research design. David Rutstein points out that "attention must be given to the ways an experiment can be designed to maintain its scientific validity, meet ethical requirements, and yet yield the necessary new knowledge."¹⁷

In the medical area, researchers should ask themselves if the experiment is therapeutic, or conducted only for its research value. Research is clearly non-therapeutic when it is carried out solely to gain information that will benefit others, and is of no use to the patient.

In social science experiments, the researcher should ask the following questions:

- Is it ethical to ask people to perform these actions?
- Will the procedures humiliate them or cause them psychological harm?
- Could any part of the research cause irreversible changes in the subjects' personality or moral values?
- Will my actions mislead subjects by lending support to false ideas or prejudices?

Clearly, such a procedure would eliminate proposals that require participants to do things that are illegal or immoral, that ask them to behave in ways that are demeaning to themselves or to others, or that expose them to scenes of pornography or violence.

Other ethical dilemmas include po-

tential conflicts of interest and threats to researchers' integrity. They may be offered grants or other inducements by special interests (tobacco or alcohol companies, for example) or be pressured to produce data supporting a particular agenda. Christian researchers will doubtless also want to engage in serious reflection and prayer, perhaps seeking pastoral and ethical guidance, before designing research that may be used to harm or destroy human beings or the natural world.

Guarding individual rights

The Christian researcher using human subjects must pay particular attention to guarding individual rights. This would involve principles of disclosure, freedom of participation, avoidance of deception, and protection of privacy.

Disclosure. Candor helps ensure integrity in research, and keeps the researcher from exploiting participants. No subject should be seen as simply a case or a statistic, a representative of some class or category of persons.

As free moral agents, human beings have the right to control their own lives and to receive enough information to make informed decisions; therefore, researchers should share adequate facts to enable the subjects to judge for themselves the balance between risk and benefit, and to decide whether to participate in the study.

In general, the law in some countries imposes a strict duty of disclosure, wherever an individual with a great deal to lose is exposed to a risk or is asked to relinquish rights by someone with considerably greater knowledge.¹⁸ Therefore, the researcher should describe for each subject the procedures to be followed, and why. This would include (1) identifying experimental procedures; (2) describing the discomforts and risks as well as benefits of the study; (3) identifying other procedures that might be helpful; (4) offering to explain any questions about the procedures; (5) assuring

the subject that he or she can withdraw from the project at any time.¹⁹ The details should be described in a way that subjects can understand, allowing time for them to return with additional questions.

Freedom to participate. A Christian approach to using human subjects will ensure that no coercion is employed and that the individual is free to participate or not participate in the research. If explanations are geared to their level of comprehension, even poorly educated persons can participate freely in research. However, if indigent people are offered cash payments or medical care in exchange for participating, or if people "volunteer" for a study because of financial need or their desire for some benefit, such as a reduced prison sentence, this could constitute coercion.

John Fletcher, a Christian ethicist who has devoted much study to the practical aspects of informed consent, suggests that several other factors can affect the autonomy of subjects: whether they are ill or dependent on the researcher for medical care, the circumstances surrounding the institution, and the desire to please the investigator.²⁰ Like their Master, researchers should treat with special regard children,

the underprivileged, and the mentally incompetent.

Avoidance of deception. Many researchers argue that the only way they can get accurate information about their subjects' behavior is to withhold information about the experiment or study. If the subjects knew their actions were being studied, they might act differently. This is a difficult problem. Simulations are often inadequate, since subjects asked to describe how they would react in a particular situation may not know, or don't want to tell. On the other hand, if the simulations are too realis-

For Additional Information

An Internet search using words like *ethics, guidelines, human subjects, social sciences, sociology, and psychology* will produce many helpful citations and the full text for such documents as the American Psychological Association's and the American Sociologists' codes of ethics as well as links to related sites and hotlines. See also the following World Wide Web sites:

On bioethics and biomedical ethics resources:

<http://www.ethics.ubc.ca/resources/biomed/>
<http://www.who.ch/pll/dsa/cat95/ethic5.htm#inter>
<http://www.ethics.ubc.ca/resources/biomed/>
<http://ccme-mac4.bsd.uchicago.edu/CCMEDocs/Others>

Loma Linda University's Center for Christian Bioethics:

<http://www.llu.edu/llu/bioethics>

On clinical medical ethics:

<http://www.ccme-mac4.bsd.uchicago.edu/CCMEHomePage.html>

On human subjects protections:

http://www.er.doe.gov/production/ober/HELSDR_top.html
<http://www.nih.gov/grants/oprr/oprr.htm>
<http://www.dc.peachnet.edu/~shale/humanities/composition/assignments/experiment/general.html>

The Nuremberg Code:

http://www.ushmm.org/research/doctors/Nuremberg_Code.htm

Psychology:

<http://www.usask.ca/psychology/ethics.html>

tic, they may be unduly stressful for subjects.²¹

Deception always has the potential of harming those being deceived, since they might not have participated in the research if they had been fully informed. They may lose faith in the researchers and other authority figures, and even in the merits of science in general. Deception may also affect the researcher's reputation for truthfulness as well as his or her character. When researchers trick, deceive, and manipulate their subjects, they become accustomed to demeaning other people's humanity. They may develop delusions of grandeur and omnipotence, and become calloused and cynical, which could destroy the integrity of their scientific work.

Protection of privacy. Researchers need to guard subjects' privacy. Invasion of privacy includes manipulating people to do something embarrassing, or obtaining and disclosing private information that places them in a false light. Having sensitive information about an individual gives the researcher a great deal of power. Depending on how the data are used, the person may be subjected to ridicule and intolerance—or even to legal or governmental action. If the studies are used to stereotype an ethnic group, the harm might even extend to his or her community and descendants. Personal interviews are especially problematic, since records on identified subjects may be subpoenaed or used in legal proceedings.

The following questions may help protect privacy: For what purpose is the information sought? Is this purpose legitimate and important? Is the information necessary to the research? Are the proposed methods the only or the least offensive way to obtain the information? What restrictions or restraints have been placed on the privacy-invasive techniques? How will this information be protected once it is recorded?²²

Recommendations

To help sensitize themselves to the ethical and procedural dilemmas described above, Adventist university students should take ethics courses, read widely in related areas, and study the codes of ethics for their professions.²³ This will help them better understand how Christian principles interact with real life. A search of the Internet will produce a large number of helpful materials, including ethics guidelines and codes of conduct for human experimentation. (See box on page 7.)

Institutions can set up internal review boards that require prospective research students and professors to sign a form indicating that they understand the ethical principles of using human subjects in experimentation and intend to follow specific guidelines, including the use of consent forms for participants. The following areas are usually included in such policies:

- Ethical and scientific design of the experiment or study, including potential usefulness of the research versus drawbacks.
- Methods of data collection and storage, including provisions for ensuring confidentiality of data.
- Methods of choosing subjects.
- Types of subjects to be used. Special cautions should be included when children, the elderly, minorities, marginalized groups, persons engaged in illegal activities, or prisoners are included as subjects of research; or when the researcher-subject relationship might affect the ability to freely give consent.
- Promises and commitments made to subjects.
- Informed consent, including debriefing of subjects and permission for them to withdraw at any time without repercussions.
- Other ethical considerations (lying to subjects, asking subjects to engage in unethical behavior, con-

flicts of interest, etc.).

- Any laws or government guidelines that apply to the research being done.
- Method of presenting the findings.

By following the above suggestions, Adventist students, professors, and researchers can discover the exciting mysteries of science, while respecting and benefitting humankind.

Beverly Rumble is the editor of The Journal of Adventist Education. She is also the secretary of The Christian View of Human Life Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Her mailing address: 12501 Old Columbia Pike; Silver Spring, Maryland 20904; U.S.A.

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3. After a two-year investigation, Massachusetts Rep. Edward Markey in 1986 released a report detailing the experiments, entitled "American Nuclear Guinea Pigs: Three Decades of Radioactive Experiments on U.S. Citizens." Markey stated that officials had conducted "repugnant" and "bizarre" experiments on hospital patients, prison inmates, and hundreds of others who "might not have retained their full faculties for informed consent." Reported by Debra D. Durocher in "Radiation Redux," *American Journalism Review*, 16 (March 1994), 2: 35.
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Hell: Eternal torment or annihilation?

by **Samuele Bacchiocchi**

More and more, evangelical scholars are questioning the traditional view of hell as eternal torment and turning to the biblical position of eternal punishment.

Hell is a biblical doctrine. But what kind of hell? A place where the impenitent sinners burn forever and consciously suffer pain in an everlasting and never-ending fire? Or a penal judgment through which God annihilates sinners and sin forever?

Traditionally, over the centuries, churches have taught and preachers have thundered hell as an eternal torment. But in recent times, we seldom hear the old “fire and brimstone” sermons, even from fundamentalist preachers, who may be theoretically still committed to such a belief. Their reticence to preach on eternal torment is more likely not due to a lack of integrity in proclaiming an unpopular truth, but to their aversion to preaching a doctrine they find it hard to believe. After all, how is it possible that the God, who so loved the world to send His only begotten Son to save sinners, can also be a God who tortures people (even the worst of sinners) forever, time without end? How can God be a God of love and justice and yet torment sinners forever in hell fire?

This unacceptable paradox has led Bible scholars of all persuasions to re-examine the biblical teachings regarding hell and final punishment.¹

The fundamental question is: *Does hellfire torment the lost eternally or consume them permanently?* Responses to this question vary. Two recent interpretations designed to make hell more humane deserve brief mention.

Alternative views on hell

Metaphorical view of hell. The metaphorical interpretation holds that hell is everlasting torment, but the suffering is more mental than physical. The fire is

not literal but figurative, and the pain is caused more by a sense of separation from God than by physical torments.²

Billy Graham expresses this metaphorical view when he says: “I have often wondered if hell is a terrible burning within our hearts for God, to fellowship with God, a fire that we can never quench.”³ Graham’s interpretation is ingenious, to say the least. Unfortunately, it ignores the fact that the biblical description of “burning” refers not to a burning within the heart, but to a place where the wicked are consumed.

William Crockett also argues for the metaphorical view: “Hell, then, should not be pictured as an inferno belching fire like Nebuchadnezzar’s fiery furnace. The most we can say is that the rebellious will be cast from the presence of God, without any hope of restoration. Like Adam and Eve they will be driven away, but this time into ‘eternal night,’ where joy and hope are forever lost.”⁴

The problem with this view of hell is that it merely wants to replace physical torment with mental anguish. Some may question if eternal mental anguish is really more humane than physical torment. Even if that were true, the lowering of the pain quotient in a non-literal hell does not substantially change the nature of hell, since it still remains a place of unending torment.

The solution is to be found not in humanizing or sanitizing the traditionalist view of hell so that it may ultimately prove to be a more tolerable place for the wicked to spend eternity, but in understanding the true nature of the final punishment which, as we shall see, is permanent annihilation and not eternal torment.

The universalist view of hell. A second and more radical revision of hell has been attempted by *universalists* who reduce hell to a temporary condition of graded punishments that ultimately leads to heaven. Universalists believe that ultimately God will succeed in bringing every human being to salvation and eternal life so that no one, in fact, will be condemned in the final judgment to either eternal torment or annihilation.⁵

No one can deny the appeal universalism has for the Christian conscience, because any person who has sensed God's love longs to see Him save everyone. Yet, our appreciation for the universalists' concern to uphold the triumph of God's love and to refute the unbiblical concept of *eternal* suffering must not blind us to the fact that this doctrine is a serious distortion of biblical teaching. *Universal salvation cannot be right just because eternal suffering is wrong.* The universal *scope* of God's saving *purpose* must not be confused with the *fact* that those who reject His provision of salvation will perish.

While both the metaphorical and universalistic views represent well-meaning attempts to soften the concept of eternal suffering, they fail to do justice to the biblical data and thus ultimately misrepresent the biblical doctrine of the final punishment of the unsaved. The sensible solution to the problems of the traditionalist view is to be found, not by lowering or eliminating the pain quotient of a literal hell but, by accepting hell for what it is: the final punishment and permanent annihilation of the wicked. As the Bible says: "The wicked will be no more" (Psalm 37:10, RSV)* because "their end is destruction" (Philippians 3:19).

The annihilation view of hell

The belief in the final annihilation of the lost is based on four major biblical considerations: (1) death as punishment of sin; (2) the biblical vocabulary on the

destruction of the wicked; (3) the moral implications of eternal torment; and (4) the cosmological implications of eternal torment.

Death as punishment of sin. The final annihilation of impenitent sinners is indicated, first of all, by the fundamental biblical principle that the final punishment of sin is death: "The soul that sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4, 20); "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). The punishment of sin, of course, comprises not only the first death, which all experience as a result of Adam's sin, but also what the Bible calls the second death (Revelation 20:14; 21:8), which is the final, irreversible death experienced by impenitent sinners. This means that the ultimate wages of sin is not eternal torment, but permanent death.

The Bible teaches death to be the cessation of life. Were it not for the assurance of resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:18), the death that we experience would be the termination of our existence. It is the resurrection that turns death from being the final end of life into being a temporary sleep. But there is no resurrection from the second death, because those who experience it are consumed in "the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:14). That will be the final annihilation.

The biblical vocabulary on the destruction of the wicked. The second compelling reason for believing in the annihilation of the lost at the final judgment is the rich vocabulary of destruction used in the Bible to describe the end of the wicked. According to Basil Atkinson, the Old Testament uses more than 25 nouns and verbs to describe the final destruction of the wicked.⁶

Several psalms, for example, describe the final destruction of the wicked with dramatic imagery (Psalm 1:3-6; 2:9-12; 11:1-7; 34:8-22; 58:6-10; 69:22-28; 145:17, 20). In Psalm 37, for example, we read that the wicked "will soon *fade like the grass*" (vs. 2); they "shall be *cut off* . . . and . . . will be *no more*" (vss. 9, 10);

they will "*perish* . . . like smoke they *vanish away*" (vs. 20); "transgressors shall be altogether *destroyed*" (vs. 38). Psalm 1 contrasts the way of the righteous with that of the wicked. Of the latter it says that "the wicked will not stand in the judgment" (vs. 5); they will be "like chaff which the wind drives away" (vs. 4); "the way of the wicked will *perish*" (vs. 6). In Psalm 145, David affirms: "The Lord preserves all who love him; but all the wicked he will *destroy*" (vs. 20). This sampling of references on the final destruction of the wicked is in complete harmony with the teaching of the rest of Scripture.

The prophets frequently announce the ultimate destruction of the wicked in conjunction with the eschatological day of the Lord. Isaiah proclaims that "rebels and sinners shall be *destroyed together*, and those who forsake the Lord shall be *consumed*" (Isaiah 1:28). Similar descriptions are seen in Zephaniah (1:15, 17, 18) and Hosea (13:3).

The last page of the Old Testament provides a descriptive contrast of the destiny of believers and unbelievers. On those that fear the Lord, "the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings" (Malachi 4:2). But with unbelievers the day of the Lord "*shall burn them up* . . . so that it will leave them *neither root nor branch*" (Malachi 4:1).

The New Testament follows closely the Old in describing the end of the wicked with words and pictures denoting total annihilation. Jesus compared the utter destruction of the wicked to such things as the weeds that are bound in bundles to be *burned* (Matthew 13:30, 40), the bad fish that is *thrown away* (Matthew 13:48), the harmful plants that are *rooted up* (Matthew 15:13), the fruitless trees that are *cut down* (Luke 13:7), the withered branches that are *burned up* (John 15:6), the unfaithful tenants who are *destroyed* (Luke 20:16), the evil servant who will be *cut in pieces* (Matthew 24:51), the antediluvians who were *destroyed* by the Flood (Luke

17:27), the people of Sodom and Gomorrah who were *destroyed by fire* (Luke 17:29), and the rebellious servants who were *slain* at the return of their master (Luke 19:14, 27).

All these illustrations graphically depict the ultimate destruction of the wicked. The contrast between the destiny of the saved and that of the lost is one of *life versus destruction*.

Those who appeal to Christ's references to hell or hellfire (*gehenna*, Matthew 5:22, 29, 30; 18:8, 9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 44, 46, 47, 48) to support their belief in eternal torment, fail to recognize an important point. As John Stott points out, "The *fire itself* is termed 'eternal' and 'unquenchable,' but it would be very odd if what is thrown into it proves indestructible. Our expectation would be the opposite: it would be consumed for ever, not tormented for ever. Hence it is the smoke (evidence that the fire has done its work) which 'goes up for ever and ever' (Revelation 14:11; cf. 19:3)."⁷ Christ's reference to *gehenna* does not indicate that hell is a place of unending torment. What is eternal or unquenchable is not the punishment but the fire which, as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, causes the complete and permanent destruction of the wicked, a condition that lasts forever.

Christ's declaration that the wicked "will go away into *eternal punishment*, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:46) is generally regarded as proof of the conscious eternal suffering of the wicked. This interpretation ignores the difference between *eternal punishment* and *eternal punishing*. The Greek *aionios* ("eternal") literally means "age-lasting" and often refers to the *permanence of the result* rather than the *continuation of a process*. For example, Jude 7 says that Sodom and Gomorrah underwent "a punishment of eternal [*aionios*] fire." It is evident that the fire that destroyed the two cities is eternal, not because of its *duration* but because of its *permanent results*.

Another example is found in 2 Thessalonians 1:9, where Paul, speaking of those who reject the gospel, says: "They shall suffer the *punishment of eternal destruction* and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might." It is evident that the destruction of the wicked cannot be eternal in its duration, because it is difficult to imagine an eternal, inconclusive process of destruction. Destruction presupposes annihilation. The destruction of the wicked is eternal, not because the *process* of destruction continues forever, but because the *results* are permanent.

The language of destruction is inescapable in the Book of Revelation. There it represents God's way of overcoming the opposition of evil to Himself and His people. John describes with vivid imagery the consignment of the devil, the beast, the false prophet, death, Hades, and all the wicked into the lake of fire, which is "the second death" (Revelation 21:8; cf. 20:14; 2:11; 20:6).

Jews frequently used the phrase "second death" to describe the final, irreversible death. Numerous examples can be found in the Targum, the Aramaic translation and interpretation of the Old Testament. For example, the Targum on Isaiah 65:6 reads: "Their punishment shall be in Gehenna where the fire burns all the day. Behold, it is written before me: 'I will not give them respite during [their] life but will render them the punishment of their transgressions and will deliver their bodies to the second death.'"⁸

For the saved, the resurrection marks the reward of a second and higher life, but for the unsaved it marks the retribution of a second and final death. As there is no more death for the redeemed (Revelation 21:4), so there is no more life for the lost (Revelation 21:8). The "second death," then, is the final, irreversible death. To interpret the phrase otherwise, as eternal conscious torment or separation from God, negates the bib-

lical meaning of death as cessation of life.

The moral implications of eternal torment. A third reason for believing in the final annihilation of the lost is the unacceptable moral implications of the doctrine of eternal torment. The notion that God deliberately tortures sinners throughout the endless ages of eternity is totally incompatible with the biblical revelation of God as infinite love. A God who inflicts unending torture upon His creatures, no matter how sinful they may have been, cannot be the loving Father revealed to us by Jesus Christ.

Does God have two faces? Is He boundlessly merciful on one side and insatiably cruel on the other? Can He love sinners so much that He sent His Son to save them, and yet hate impenitent sinners so much that He subjects them to unending cruel torment? Can we legitimately praise God for His goodness, if He torments sinners throughout the ages of eternity? The moral intuition God has implanted within our conscience cannot accept the cruelty of a deity who subjects sinners to unending torment. Divine justice could never demand for finite sins the infinite penalty of eternal pain.

Furthermore, eternal, conscious torment is contrary to the biblical vision of justice because such a punishment would create a serious disproportion between the sins committed during a lifetime and the resulting punishment lasting for all eternity. As John Stott asks, "Would there not, then, be a serious disproportion between sins consciously committed in time and torment consciously experienced throughout eternity? I do not minimize the gravity of sin as rebellion against God our Creator, but I question whether 'eternal conscious torment' is compatible with the Biblical revelation of divine justice."⁹

The cosmological implications of eternal torment. A fourth and final reason for believing in the annihilation of the lost is that eternal torment presupposes an

eternal cosmic dualism. Heaven and hell, happiness and pain, good and evil would continue to exist forever alongside each other. It is impossible to reconcile this view with the prophetic vision of the new world in which there shall be no more “mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4). How could crying and pain be forgotten if the agony and anguish of the lost were permanent features of the new order?

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even if it were far away from the camp of the saved, could only serve to destroy the peace and happiness of the new world. The new creation would turn out to be flawed from day one, since sinners would remain an eternal reality in God’s universe.

The purpose of the plan of salvation is to eradicate ultimately the presence of sin and sinners from this world. It is only if sinners, Satan, and the devils ultimately are consumed in the lake of fire and extincted in the second death that we truly can say that Christ’s redemptive mission has been accomplished. Everlasting torment would cast a permanent shadow of darkness over the new creation.

Our age desperately needs to learn the fear of God, and this is one reason for preaching the final judgment and punishment. We need to warn people that those who reject Christ’s principles of life and the provision of salvation ultimately will experience a fearful judgment and “suffer the punishment of eternal destruction” (2 Thessalonians 1:9). We need to proclaim boldly the great alternatives between eternal life and permanent destruction. The recovery of the biblical view of the final judgment can loosen the preachers’ tongues, because they can then preach this vital doctrine without fear of portraying God as a monster.

Samuele Bacchiocchi (Ph.D., Pontificia Universita Gregoriana) is a professor of religion at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A. This article is based on a chapter from his new book Immortality or Resurrection? A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Biblical Perspectives, 1997). His address: 4990 Appian Way; Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103; U.S.A.

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*All Scripture passages in this article are from

the Revised Standard Version.

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2. See William V. Crockett, “The Metaphorical View,” in William Crockett, ed., *Four Views of Hell* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1992), pp. 43-81.
3. Billy Graham, “There Is a Real Hell,” *Decision* 25 (July-August 1984), p. 2. Elsewhere Graham asks: “Could it be that the fire Jesus talked about is an eternal search for God that is never quenched? That, indeed, would be hell. To be away from God forever, separated from His Presence.” See *The Challenge: Sermons From Madison Square Garden* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1969), p. 75.
4. Crockett, p. 61.
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6. Id.
7. John Stott and David L. Edwards, *Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1988), p. 316.
8. M. McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch* (New York: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1978), p. 123.
9. Stott and Edwards, *Essentials*, pp. 318, 319.

When the Earth's crust explodes

By M. Elaine Kennedy

A study of the volcanos around the Pacific Rim helps us understand the factors causing earthquakes and eruptions.

You live in California and you are proud of your beautiful home. It overlooks the blue waters of the Pacific Ocean. One sunny afternoon, you are sitting on your favorite chair on the deck, watching the white waves tirelessly, but rhythmically, beating away now with gentleness, now with thunder. The radio is playing your favorite music, and life seems so quiet, sweet, and enjoyable. Suddenly the music is interrupted. An early warning emergency system goes into operation. A possible volcanic eruption accompanied by earthquake on the rim of the ocean seems imminent, and you along with your neighbors are asked to evacuate to a safer location.

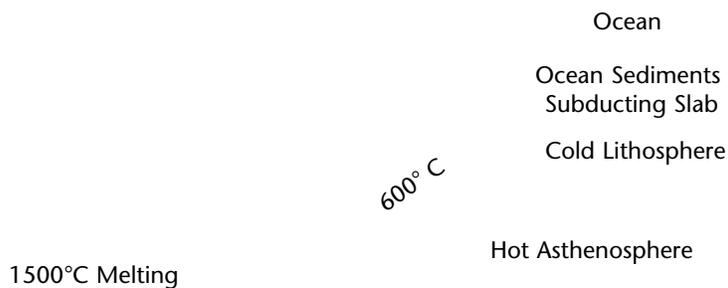
Fiction? Not any more. A ring of volcanic and earthquake activity is being felt around the rim of the Pacific Ocean. Volcanologists, with the help of modern technology, are able to monitor dormant and active volcanos in the Pacific Rim, identify indicators of increased activity that may lead to eruptions, and issue early warning to communities living along the Pacific Coast.

Such an increased understanding of the subsurface processes may also increase the predictive power of the volcanologists. But understanding these processes does not answer the crucial human question, "Why does this happen?" Other information sources are needed to help us grapple with that issue. The answer remains speculative, but some basic information about the processes that produce some of the molten rock within the earth may be helpful. Since there is a volcanic rim around the Pacific Ocean, this essay will begin by looking at that region.

The ring of fire

Along the margins of the Pacific Ocean there are deep trenches. The Pacific Ocean floor sinks into these trenches and slides below the rocks that form the continental crust. (See figure.) This process is referred to as subduction,¹ and volcanologists suggest that this subduction process produces the source material for most of the volcanism surrounding the Pacific Ocean, hence the phrase "Ring of Fire." The subducting oceanic slab carries seawater and some crustal material with it. The more deeply these materials are subducted, the higher the temperatures and pressures around the rocks. Eventually the combination of volatiles or gases produced from the seawater and crustal material combined with increasing pressures and temperatures cause melting of the subducted slab and upper mantle.² The melted rock or magma then begins to rise through the continental crust, generating new, and utilizing old, fractures and faults and incorporating additional crustal material as it moves.³ (See figure.)

When the crustal rocks melt, some rock types chemically decompose and release gases such as carbon dioxide and sulfur dioxide. The rising magma may mix with magmas from other sources, which also contribute volatiles. Gases increase the pressure within the magma and decrease its density, which aids in the upward movement of the molten rocks along faults.⁴ However, molten rock moving along fractures does not mean that a volcano is about to erupt. Volcanologists look for specific indicators of imminent volcanic activity.



Volcanism during the Genesis Flood

There is another aspect of volcanism that should be considered from a biblical-Christian perspective. The continental and oceanic rocks contain an extensive record of volcanism. Seventh-day Adventists believe that most of this record is part of the Genesis flood. The inclusion of volcanism in the Flood account increases the complexity and devastation of that event. (See page 15.) Aerially extensive basalt flows such as the Siberian Traps, Deccan Traps in India, Parana Basalts in Brazil, and the Columbia River Basalts in the northwestern United States, may have begun during or near the end of the Genesis flood. In addition, widespread volcanic ash beds are found interbedded throughout the rock layers of earth's crust.

During discussions of the biblical flood, Christians comment on the destructive power of the flood waters but seldom refer to the volcanic and earthquake-related devastation that accompanied that event. As Christian scientists continue to study the geologic record, their awareness of the complexity of the Genesis flood increases.

Conclusion

Very little is really known about the subsurface processes that contribute to volcanism. Most of the theories are developed from surface measurements. As volcanologists attempt to study these processes, they hope to explain why eruptions occur.

Within the Christian community there is an awareness of a power beyond the physical and chemical processes observed in nature. The biblical interpretation of volcanos, earthquakes, floods as judgments causes Christians to question the randomness of events. Many Christians consider most natural disasters to be random events, part of a sinful world. The biblical perspective ties these

Continued on page 16.

Eruption precursors

Data on volcanos is collected worldwide because scientists want to know when the next eruption will occur. Information that seems most useful includes seismic (earthquake) activity and types of gases that are emitted. Common gases released from volcanic fissures and craters include sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, hydrogen sulfide, and water vapor.⁵ Earthquake activity increases dramatically just prior to an eruption. Most of the activity is about 4 or less on the Richter Scale; however, larger-scale earthquakes can occur with loud noises, liquefaction, and other earthquake-related activity.⁶ As pressures build within the magma chamber due to the incorporation of volatiles from the surrounding crustal rocks, the potential for eruption increases.⁷

The eruption

Eruption occurs when the pressure in the magma chamber exceeds the pressure exerted by the weight of the overlying rocks. Loud explosions and earthquakes often precede and accompany the ejection of lava, incandescent rocks, gases, and ash.⁸ Once the eruption occurs, many people are interested not only in what happened but also ask, "Why did this occur?"

Christian framework

Within religious communities, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions have been of interest since they have been commonly referred to as "acts of God." Some think that in the past, people attributed volcanoes and earthquakes to God or evil spirits out of ignorance but the Book of Job makes it clear that both God and Satan act in nature (see Job 1:6-12). Now that more is known about the processes involved in the eruptions, people no longer consider such activity as divine or mystical intervention. The Christian community recognizes the difficulty in knowing how or when God might use natural processes to His purpose (see Matthew 21:18-22; Luke 13:4, 5). Thinking that we know how something works does not mean that God is not involved in the timing of the event or the process. The concept is a difficult one since we do not know the mind of God. We do not know if any or all of the events include divine intervention or if most are simply processes that occur randomly in our world. Our lack of knowledge on this topic should lead us to be cautious with our comments about end of the world events and judgments (see Mark 13:8; Luke 21:9-11, 25-28).

Ellen G. White on volcanism and earthquakes

Ellen White made several comments on volcanism and earthquakes.* One of the most complete statements, included in a book first published in 1890, is this:

“At this time [the Genesis Flood] immense forests were buried. These have since been changed to coal, forming the extensive coal beds that now exist, and also yielding large quantities of oil. The coal and oil frequently ignite and burn beneath the surface of the earth. Thus rocks are heated, limestone is burned, and iron ore melted. The action of the water upon the lime adds fury to the intense heat, and causes earthquakes, volcanoes, and fiery issues. As the fire and water come in contact with ledges of rock and ore, there are heavy explosions underground, which sound like muffled thunder.

The air is hot and suffocating. Volcanic eruptions follow; and these often failing to give sufficient vent to the heated elements, the earth itself is convulsed, the ground heaves and swells like the waves of the sea, great fissures appear, and sometimes cities, villages, and burning mountains are swallowed up. These wonderful manifestations will be more and more frequent and terrible just before the second coming of Christ and the end of the world, as signs of its speedy destruction” (*Patriarchs and Prophets* [Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1958], pp. 108, 109).

Ellen White’s description of processes contributing to volcanism are very similar to the ideas published by the geologists of her day. This explains why much of the language used is more descriptive than scientific. A century ago, plate tectonic theory had not been developed and the geologic community focused solely on the eruption process. Four aspects of these descriptions

are discussed below:

1. “Coal and oil frequently ignite and burn. . . . limestone is burned.”

The phrase “ignite and burn” may be an attempt to describe the incorporation of coal and oil into the molten rock rising through the crust. This process occurs continuously as magma rises within the continental crust. In another reference,* White notes that volcanoes are not typically found near the major coal, oil, and gas deposits. This statement may indicate her awareness that it is not the burning of the coal that melts the surrounding rocks but rather that the molten rock ignites the coal and oil. However, she does support the idea that coal and oil contribute to volcanism in some way. She does not specify the process that “ignites” the coal and oil, so the phrase “thus the rocks are heated” may not refer to the “burning” coal and oil but rather to the process responsible for the burning, i.e., ascending magma (an unknown concept at that time). It is interesting to note that she refers to limestone as burning and iron ore as melting, again indicating the destruction of the limestone into its various components.

2. “The action of the water upon the lime adds fury to the intense heat, and causes earthquakes, volcanoes, and fiery issues. As the fire and water come in contact with ledges of rock and ore, . . .”

In non-scientific language the author describes the importance of the volatiles within the magma chamber relative to the eruption process. Coal and oil primarily produce carbon, sulfur, and hydrogen as they come into contact with the ascending molten rocks. Water is present as a gas and limestone is the source of carbonate ions ($\text{CO}_3^{=}$) that recombine to form a variety of gases. These components form the gases monitored by vulcanologists today.

3. “The earth itself is convulsed. . . .”

Those who were close to Mount St. Helens on May 18, 1980 and lived to tell the tale spoke to reporters about the “hot and suffocating” air as well as the explosions. Earthquake activity is frequently associated

with volcanic eruptions due to the increasing subsurface pressures that generate some of the “explosions underground” as well as surface waves (the “ground heaves and swells”).

“Great fissures appear, and sometimes cities, villages, and burning mountains are swallowed up.”

The phrase “great fissures appear” sounds as though these fissures “swallowed up” cities, etc. While it is true that large regions are engulfed, the destruction is due to the lava and ash that erupt through the new vents, thus the villages may be “swallowed up” by the flowing lava. This reading of the passage is more consistent with the opening phrase “Volcanic eruptions follow; . . .” and it may be understood in this context that the earthquakes generate the fissures that may form vents that allow additional lava and ash to escape.

The frequent reports of volcanic and earthquake activity in the public news broadcasts do not include a Christian perspective. Ellen G. White cites volcanoes and earthquakes as powerful reminders that catastrophic destruction is a very real part of our world and that our world can and will end quickly. White also assures us that there is a larger context and, as is typical of her writing, it is her final sentence in this paragraph that points us to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

**A list of additional sources for these comments may be obtained from the author at Geoscience Research Institute, Loma Linda University; Loma Linda, California 92350; U.S.A.*

Fax: 909-558-4314. E-mail: ekennedy@ccmail.llu.edu or by accessing the EGW database through Loma Linda University on the World Wide Web.

events to the end of the world, and their occurrence should strengthen our faith in the second coming of Jesus. A sudden notable increase in the frequency of natural calamities is predicted just prior to the return of Christ. Although friends and family may perish during one of these disasters, Christians have faith in the abiding, undying love of the Father for His children. These processes remind us of the greatness of God's power, and His ability to control the forces of nature.

M. Elaine Kennedy (Ph.D., University of Southern California) is a geologist and an assistant research scientist at the Geoscience Research Institute. Her address: Geoscience Research Institute; Loma Linda, California, 92350; U.S.A. Dialogue has published other articles by Dr. Kennedy: "God and Geology in Graduate School" (3:3), "The Intriguing Dinosaur" (5:2), and "The Search for Adam's Ancestors" (8:1).

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The Bible: How is it unique?

By Peter van Bemmelen

In its claims and promises, in its origin and focus, the Bible carves for itself a unique place in history.

The Bible! No other book in history has been loved so much and reviled as much. Millions have staked their life and hope on its promises, and many have spent their lives attacking its credibility. To many it provides vital answers to questions of life and death, present and future, sin and salvation. To others, it is nothing more than a book of myths and fables.

Regardless of what its admirers and critics might say, one fact stands out without any dispute: The Bible is a unique book—in its historicity, origin, monotheism, prophecies, and redemptive focus. Other books may contain similar concepts and uplift high moral principles, but the Bible is different from all others in many respects.

Unique in historicity

Historicity is one of Scripture's distinctive characteristics. While other religious literature contains many myths and legends, the Bible presents straightforward historical narratives.¹ Critics may claim that much of the Bible is mythological and that its historical narratives are full of errors, but the facts contradict such claims. Archaeological discoveries of the last two centuries have highlighted the historical nature of Scripture in numerous ways. Archaeology cannot prove that the Bible is the Word of God, but it certainly has illuminated and at times provided verification for the historical records of the Scriptures.² Responding to accusations that biblical history is riddled with errors, Donald Wiseman, a respected professor of Assyriology, has well argued that archaeological evidence has for the most part eliminated such "supposed errors."

Indeed, "the majority of errors can be ascribed to errors of interpretation by modern scholars and not to substantiated 'errors' of fact presented by the biblical historians. This view is further strengthened when it is remembered how many theories and interpretations of Scripture have been checked or corrected by archaeological discoveries."³

Unique in its origin

Another uniqueness of the Bible is its distinctiveness of origin. Why is the Old Testament so different from other ancient contemporary literature? One psalm provides an answer: "He [God] declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any nation; and as for His judgments, they have not known them" (Psalm 147:19-20).^{*} Israel was deeply conscious of the fact that Yahweh, the Creator of heaven and earth, had revealed Himself to Abraham and his descendants in a way that He had not done to other nations. The apostle Paul, who was trained in Judaism but became the foremost apostle of the gospel, agrees with the claim of the Psalmist that God gave special revelation to Israel. "To them," he says, "were committed the oracles of God" (Romans 3:1,2). The oracles mean the same as "the Holy Scriptures" (2 Timothy 3:15). No other nation or group of people—be it Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, or Romans—ever produced a collection of writings like the Bible. These nations did leave a legacy of history, literature, poetry, and drama, but none had left anything similar to the Hebrew Scripture—a coherent, unified body of writings covering history, biography, ethics,

and a religious system that have arched over a period of more than a thousand years and written by many different authors. The uniqueness lies in the source from which the Old Testament arose: the unique, divine revelation given to Israel.

Of course there was a divine purpose behind this revelation. God intended that the Israelites, as the privileged recipients of Yahweh's revelation, would share their knowledge of God with other nations. From the beginning, God stated His purpose that in Abraham and his descendants, "all the families of the earth" would be blessed (Genesis 12:3; 22:18). It was God's plan that the Holy Scriptures, originally entrusted to the Jews, would eventually become the common heritage of "every nation, tribe, tongue, and people" (Revelation 14:6). The Scriptures were not only given to Israel, but through Israel to the whole human family.

Unique in monotheism

Monotheism is another unique feature that sets the Hebrew Scriptures apart from all other religious literature of ancient times. Other ancient nations were polytheists, and much of their sacred literature consists of myths about multitudinous gods and goddesses. By contrast, the Old Testament speaks about Yahweh as the only true God and admits no other: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" (Deuteronomy 6:4, 5). This confession of Yahweh as the one God, the living God, the Creator of heaven and earth was the foundation of Israel's religion. It is true that through the centuries many Israelites succumbed to the lure of polytheism. But the prophets consistently called them back to the faith in the oneness of God. Eventually, monotheism did prevail in Israel. Despite disclaimers of modern critics, the Bible—the Old as well as the New Tes-

tament—knows of only one God. This unique monotheism of the Bible is neither the result of human genius nor the end product of an evolutionary process in the history of Israel's religion, but it "is an inspired insight revealed by God to his people."⁴ Without this special revelation, Israel would have gone the way of all other ancient nations. There would have been no Holy Scriptures with their distinctive portrayal of the one supreme, sovereign God.

Unique in prophetic predictions

Prophetic predictions constitute another evidence to the uniqueness of the Bible. Other nations did have prophets, but they never made predictions that reached hundreds of years into the future and were fulfilled. For example, the prophecy of Daniel 2, portraying the march of history from Babylon through Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, the splintered nations of Europe, and the establishment of God's kingdom, is without parallel in any literature. Such a predictive prophecy is beyond human wisdom or foresight. Indeed, Daniel himself acknowledged the divine source of that prophecy as he explained it to King Nebuchadnezzar: "There is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known . . . what will be in the latter days" (Daniel 2:28).

That predictive prophecy is taken in the Holy Scripture seriously as indicative of the nature of the true God is seen in the challenge that Yahweh puts out: "Show the things that are to come hereafter, That we may know that you are gods" (Isaiah 41:23). Only the true God can reveal the future, and only in the Bible do we find predictive prophecies that have accurately been fulfilled over long periods of time. This provides powerful evidence that the Bible is uniquely the Word of God.

Critics, of course, have disparaged the distinctive character of the prophetic revelations by claiming that they are nothing more than history written after

the fact. To substantiate such claims, they often have to twist the evidence ruthlessly. For instance, they claim that the prophecies of Daniel, including chapter 2, were written in the second century B.C. by an unknown author rather than by the prophet Daniel in the sixth century B.C. Even that, however, would not explain how this unknown writer could foresee that the fourth empire, Rome, would be the most powerful of the four empires and that it would be followed by a divided condition that would exist for more than 1,500 years. So, against the clear evidence of history and the internal evidence of the Book of Daniel, the fourth kingdom is said to refer to Greece rather than Rome, making the prophecy of Daniel 2 (and other predictive prophecies in that book) refer to events already transpired or just about to transpire at the time of writing. But archaeological, historical, and linguistic evidence strongly favors a sixth century B.C. date for the book of Daniel.⁵ This leads to the conclusion that the matchless prediction of Daniel 2 still testifies to the fact that God is its true author.

Unique in its redemptive focus

The predictive prophecies of the Bible were never intended, however, to gratify human curiosity. They were given to reveal the true character and purposes of God to save humanity from sin. This divine plan for the redemption of the human race was progressively unfolded over hundreds of years—first in anticipation through revelations given to patriarchs and prophets, and then in fulfillment in the incarnation of the Son of God. More than anything else, it is this redemptive focus that characterizes the uniqueness of the Bible—both the Old and New Testament—as the Word of God. From the first promise of redemption in Genesis 3:15 till the final assurance of the grace of Jesus Christ in Revelation 22:21, the Bible constitutes a unique, coherent revelation of God in search of lost human beings.

The Old Testament promises of a Redeemer and their fulfilment in the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus of Nazareth as recorded in the New Testament, provide supreme evidence that these writings are truly divine. Paul rightly exalted the redemptive uniqueness of the Word of God: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

Jesus Himself frequently appealed to the Old Testament to show that His ministry, death, and resurrection, fulfilled those promises and prophecies. But many of the Jewish leaders rejected Jesus' claims and His interpretation of the Scriptures. He told those leaders in no uncertain terms: "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life. . . . Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you—Moses, in whom you trust. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" (John 5:39, 40, 45-47). Are these words not applicable today to many Christian scholars, who while claiming to pursue a rigorous scientific exegesis of the Bible, nullify the obvious meaning of the prophecies in the Old Testament and frequently attribute their interpretation and application in the New Testament to the prejudiced or misinformed understanding of the early church?

If we believe that Christ is what He claims to be—"I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6)—then we should, like Him, accept the Scriptures as "the word of God" (Mark 7:13), as Holy Scripture which "cannot be broken" (John 10:35). There is no evidence

that Jesus ever appealed to any other writings than the Scriptures. In His conflict with Satan's temptation in the wilderness Scripture was His only weapon. He said, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"" (Matthew 4:4).

Unique for me

I grew up in a secular home. We had no prayer, no reading of the Bible, no worship of God. At 19 I left home to study law at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands, my native land. I did not understand the purpose of my existence and was earnestly seeking for meaning in life. Through the reading of the Bible, I came to believe that it had the answers to my search. I accepted Jesus Christ as my Saviour and Lord. To me the Bible became a very precious book, and I wholeheartedly received it as the unique Word of God. I gave up studying law and trained for the ministry, worked for 10 years as a pastor and missionary, and then went for advanced theological studies.

At the theological seminary, a myriad of critical questions about the Bible confronted me. Did Moses really write the books attributed to him? Was David the author of all the psalms that go under his name? Was the Book of Isaiah written by three or more unknown people instead of the prophet Isaiah? Did the Book of Daniel originate in the second century B.C. rather than in the sixth? Were the narratives in the Book of Genesis myths rather than historical accounts? Were the four Gospels riddled with contradictions and factual errors? My trust in the Bible as divine revelation was wavering. I began to wonder whether the Bible really was what I had believed it to be at my conversion, 14 years earlier. I realized that if I lost my trust in the Bible I would sooner or later lose my faith in Christ, for it was through the Scriptures He had revealed Himself to me and was speaking to me

continually.

After much prayer and study, I determined that I would cling to Christ and His Word, even though I could not answer all the critical questions at that time. Now, nearly 30 years later, years filled with study and prayer, many questions have been answered; other questions remain unresolved. However, I trust that one day God will provide me with the answers, either in this life or in the world to come. But over the years, while studying as much evidence as I could and through my personal relationship with a loving and compassionate Saviour, I am more than ever convinced that the Bible is truly the Word of God. No other book qualifies for that title.

Peter van Bemmelen (Th.D., Andrews University) is professor of theology at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. His address: Andrews University; Berrien Springs, Michigan 49104; U.S.A.

Notes and references:

*All Scripture passages in this article are from the New King James Version.

1. For example, note what Ellen White wrote in 1876 at a time when higher criticism was attempting to undermine the historical accuracy of the Bible: "The lives recorded in the Bible are authentic histories of actual individuals From Adam down through successive generations to the times of the apostles we have a plain, unvarnished account of what actually occurred and the genuine experience of real characters." (*Testimonies for the Church* [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1948], vol. 4, p. 9).
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3. Donald J. Wiseman, "Archaeology and Scripture," *Westminster Theological Journal* 33 (1970-1971): 151, 152.
4. Ronald Youngblood, "Monotheism," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter A. Elwell, ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1984), p. 731.
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Linda Hyder Ferry

Dialogue with a physician for such a time as this

Millions of people are slaves to nicotine. Addicted, afflicted, and helpless, they wish they had never started that first puff, and wish even more they could kick the habit and be free again. For such people as that and for such a time as ours, help may be on the way through the research of Linda Hyder Ferry, associate professor of medicine and public health at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California. Linda Ferry, M.D., M.P.H., is a doctor with a mission: to help people stop smoking. Her groundbreaking research has led to the development of bupropion (Zyban),* the first FDA-approved, non-addicting, nicotine-free, pharmacologic treatment for nicotine dependence. Ferry says of her work: "I believe this happened by God's guidance. He gave me a persistent burden to do something about smoking."

A fifth-generation Seventh-day Adventist, Dr. Ferry graduated from Loma Linda University School of Medicine. She then took family practice residency at the University of Texas, after which she returned to Loma Linda University to obtain a Master's degree in Public Health. She is married to David Ferry, chief of cardiology at the Loma Linda Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

In 1997, Dr. Ferry established FIND: the Foundation for Innovations in Nicotine Dependence. This not-for-profit organization provides resource material and develops research that will assist those wishing to quit smoking and eliminate their nicotine dependence. You can access the foundation through the Internet at <http://www.findhelp.com> Or write to: P.O. Box 2001, Loma Linda, California 92354, U.S.A. Phone: (909) 777-3290 Fax: (909) 777-3281.E-mail: info@findhelp.com

■ So what led you to this dynamic mission to combat smoking?

My speciality is preventive medicine and public health. The Lord kept bringing me to a particular focus. "Linda," He seemed to be saying, "your interest is in preventive medicine. And the most serious preventable health problem in the world is smoking. What are you doing about it?" I felt God wanted me to look critically at the problem of smoking and search for new answers. Once that focus settled, doors opened at the right time.

■ As a doctor, you could have specialized in many different areas. Why did you get involved with smoking issues?

Three reasons, perhaps. First, my Adventist perspective and belief in the health message. As I began working in public health, I recognized that if people could quit smoking then they could live healthier, enjoy life more, and be of better service to others.

Second, my job as medical director of the Addictions Treatment Unit at the Veterans Hospital in Loma Linda. My work was to treat patients with medical problems rising from their chemical addictions (e.g., alcohol, heroin, cocaine, amphetamines). But after discharge from recovery programs, they still walked out of the hospital with a packet of cigarettes in their pockets. I won-

dered, "If they could give up all kinds of 'hard core' addictive drugs, why can't they give up nicotine?"

Thirdly, my responsibility as director of the preventive medicine residency at Loma Linda University. While designing a stop-smoking program, I came across some intriguing research. The first study indicated that people who try to quit smoking and fail are more likely to have a history of depression. The second was a survey of thousands of smokers that showed that almost one-third had depressive symptoms. Finally, a psychiatrist colleague mentioned that his patients, treated for depression and attention-deficit disorder with bupropion, reported that they did not crave coffee, chocolate, or smoking as they used to.

All these led me to think about anti-depressants as a possible aid to quit smoking.

■ So how did you start working on your idea?

In my first research attempt, I recruited my mother, a retired nurse, as my assistant. I had no funds to pay for one. The preventive medicine residents did all the work for free. I bought the medication and paid for the lab tests with a faculty seed grant from Loma Linda University. Once the pilot study was completed, bupropion manufacturers came forward with grants to develop the research program.

■ The result?

Tobacco smoking creates an addictive pattern in the brain, as nicotine controls the brain's pleasure and reward center. Using bupropion changes this brain chemistry. In some people, bupro-

pion decreases nicotine craving while they are still smoking, and within a week cigarettes may not taste good. Once a person quits smoking, bupropion stabilizes the chemical messengers in the brain where nicotine works, and decreases the nicotine withdrawal symptoms.

■ *Why is the use of medication important? Why not stress having a strong will?*

So often people say, "Why do you bother with giving people all these drugs? Giving up smoking is all in the head." Yes, it's all in the head, and it's about chemistry. What nonsmokers don't realize is that medication rearranges moods, affects the neuro-chemistry of smokers, and leaves them with a feeling of being normal.

■ *What about those who say you should just pray?*

Yes, you should pray! But in addition to prayer, there are other things you should do. Teach smokers about behavior modification skills and psychological preparation of what it's like to live without becoming dependent on nicotine. After all, God created chemistry in our brains. He made moods and emotions. When harmful substances destroy the neuro-chemical balance of the brain so that it doesn't work properly, why not give help to correct the problem? Especially when bupropion is not a substance that's going to create a new addiction or problem.

■ *So what exactly does nicotine do? What's the real killer?*

Nicotine in itself is not necessarily what kills people. It is what keeps the brain hooked so you keep using tobacco. It's the 4,800 tobacco combustion products that kill you. Thirty percent of all heart disease is related to smoking, and that's our number one killer in the United States. Between 85 and 90 percent of lung cancer is due to smoking. Probably 30 percent of all cancer is due

to smoking. Chronic obstructive lung disease is another killer. A pulmonology friend told me recently that she'd be out of business if people stopped smoking! Tobacco is also responsible for many vascular diseases, another major killer. Thus tobacco accounts for killing 434,000 people every year in the U.S., and the majority are dying 10 to 30 years prematurely.

■ *So where are we right now? Aren't fewer people smoking?*

Cigarette smoking really accelerated in the 1920s and 1930s. The figures continued to rise during World War II, with soldiers being given free cigarettes. After the war, smoking reached a high point when more than 50 percent of people in the U.S. smoked.

The first warning against smoking came in 1964, when the U.S. Surgeon General indicted tobacco as a health hazard. Since then, smoking has declined by 1 to 2 percent every year. But from 1994, the decline seems to have stopped and smoking has plateaued at around 25 percent of the U.S. population.

■ *Is quitting smoking just a matter of going to your doctor and getting a prescription for Zyban?*

Treating addictive behaviors is not achieved just by altering brain chemistry, though that is important. Addiction is like a triangle, and neuro-chemical dependency is just one of the three sides. The other two sides—helping people change their behavior and dealing with reasons for psychological dependence—are also essential. Then, of course, there is the spiritual side. In my stop-smoking classes, I emphasize using all the resources, including the spiritual, to beat the addiction.

■ *How did you get into this helping profession, into what is clearly a ministry for you?*

I grew up as an only child. I was fortunate in having Christian parents. From as far back as I can remember, my

father read to me every night. My favorite Bible story was Queen Esther. By the time I could read for myself I had asked for it so many times that my father had it memorized. I was deeply molded by that story of a little girl who had nothing to hope for in the future. God put her in a place where she was instrumental in saving the lives of thousands of her people.

That story fascinated me all my life, especially the phrase when Mordecai says to Esther, "How do you know but that you came to the kingdom for such a time as this?" And if you turn your back and don't do the hard thing, God will find someone else.

When the Lord brought me to public health practice, He kept saying to me, "Linda, the most serious health problem today is smoking. What are you going to do about it?" I simply prayed: "I don't know what to do, Lord. Please guide me. It seems as if there's hardly anything I could do that would really make a difference. But I'll keep following where You lead." God did make a difference in my life.

■ *What has been the most fulfilling aspect of your work?*

To stand with my mother, my volunteer nurse in the initial research, in front of a large audience and be recognized as being instrumental in bringing this new treatment to where it is today. To think of all those who will be saved from premature death, and how much healthier America can be. To serve God in such a rewarding ministry.

Interview by Jonathan Gallagher.

Jonathan Gallagher is the news director of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

**When the interview was conducted, bupropion was not yet available outside the United States.*



David Pendleton

*Dialogue with an Adventist
in the Hawaii House of Representatives*

Representative David Pendleton, 31, has been recognized as an “up-and-coming” player in the Hawaiian political arena. A Seventh-day Adventist since childhood, he made the leap into politics in 1996 when he ran for the State House of Representatives. Soon after his election, his Republican colleagues recognized his stand for principled leadership and selected him to be the minority whip in 1997, making him the youngest legislator and the only freshman to hold this leadership post. A committed Christian, Representative Pendleton had served as a school teacher and youth pastor as well as Associate Dean of Students at La Sierra University before returning to Hawaii to practice law and run for office.

His wife, Noemi Pendleton, also an elected official, serves on the Hawaii State Board of Education. They have two children, Roland and Raquelle, and are active members of the Manoa Seventh-day Adventist Church, Honolulu.

■ *What interested you in becoming an attorney and eventually an elected official?*

No single event or experience made me decide along that line. Instead, through the course of my life, a number of events, people, and experiences gradually moved me in that direction. My involvement in community service and leadership goes all the way back to preschool when I was the milk monitor. I also spent many hours volunteering in shelters for the homeless, soup kitchens, and at the Adventist hospital in Hawaii. Later, I volunteered for various political campaigns, including a senate campaign and President Bush’s re-election

campaign. All these experiences led me to where I am today.

■ *Did you face any major obstacles when you decided to jump into politics?*

Yes, a few. When I returned to Hawaii in 1995 after being on the mainland for several years, and began campaigning in 1996, it took a court action to prove my residence eligibility. There were also financial challenges. The incumbent’s father was an experienced fundraiser and could raise more than I could. So instead of hiring expensive professional consultants, I ran a grass-roots campaign. Volunteers made it possible for us to put all of our money into advertising that actually reached the voters through direct mail, radio time, and newspaper advertising.

■ *As a legislator, what is the main focus of your service to the community?*

My number one job is to make sure that good laws are passed and bad ones are defeated. As legislators, we have the responsibility of developing and passing statewide policies that make Hawaii a

better place to live, work, and serve. My focus has basically been fivefold: fighting crime, cutting taxes, eliminating government waste, protecting the environment, and supporting education.

In my district, I’m working to make sure that our schools are safe environments for learning. I also want to ensure that governmental services are carried out efficiently: potholes are fixed, stoplights are working, and crosswalks are repainted. These are not glamorous things, but very important to people.

■ *Many Adventists believe that people waiting for Christ’s return should not spend their time getting involved in politics. How do you react?*

Jesus commanded us to “occupy” until He comes. As Christians, we are not to lead passive lives, but be active participants. As Micah wrote, we should be doing good, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God. Public service provides an opportunity to do these kinds of service in the community. With the stroke of a pen, we can help set up a domestic violence abuse shelter, toughen sentences on child abusers, feed homeless people, and improve the economy. It’s an important way to serve our fellow human beings.

■ *How would you encourage other Christians to get involved?*

Christians should get involved in public service at all levels, be it church, school, community, or government. Show that you care, whether it be picking trash or volunteering at the local library. Every citizen needs to be involved in the business of making public policy. This task is too large and important to

leave to politicians alone. The challenge of how we should govern ourselves as a society is for everybody, not just an elite, elected few.

I would urge those who are so inclined to run for office. If working on a neighborhood board or being involved in public policy has been helpful and enjoyable, you ought to think about running for office. We need more citizen legislators rather than career politicians—hardworking men and women with a burden for schools, neighborhoods, and the environment. Public office is not about who is the most articulate, but who really feels passionate about doing good. It's not about who can raise the most money; it's about who really has a heart for service.

■ *We are often encouraged to write to our legislators about issues that concern us. Do legislators really read these letters? How effective is this communication?*

I read every single piece of mail that comes to my office, and I respond directly to every letter. If people writing to me allude to the fact that they have expertise in a particular area, I'll often ask them a few specific questions because it is important for me to have as much information as possible in order to make the right decision.

I would strongly urge you to continue to E-mail, fax, or write to your legislators on specific issues. Make sure you let them know why you're interested and why they need to respond to your concern. If you're a registered voter, let them know. If you have specific background or training in the area of concern, share with them. Let them know that you're concerned, you're involved, and that you're a reasonable person who can actually help them do their job better.

■ *Who have influenced you the most?*

Undoubtedly, my parents. Their exemplary life and Christian lifestyle greatly influenced me. They were always

involved in the church, working with homeless shelters, Pathfinders, and Sabbath school. Then I have my teachers at La Sierra University. Rennie Schoepflin, professor of history, and Richard Rice, professor of theology, really influenced my thinking. They taught me to think through issues very carefully and develop arguments that were closely reasoned. They emphasized how important it is to recognize both the pros and cons before jumping to any conclusion. History teaches us that we have had the same basic problems, such as crime, gang violence, and poverty, since the beginning of humankind all the way from Cain. That perspective has been extremely valuable to me.

■ *How do you balance your work as a legislator with your personal life?*

It's easier to preach family values than to live them. I got involved in politics because I wanted to build a better Hawaii for my children. Unfortunately, I find that the constant activity the committee meetings, the hearings, the town meetings often requires me to be away from home more than I want to.

It is very important to have a healthy family life, so we always try to have at least one meal together every day. Whenever I get a chance, I drop by my son's school for lunch. At night, we always spend some time doing homework together. On weekends, we spend a lot of time together. As a Seventh-day Adventist, I have the greatest excuse for not doing any legislative work one day a week. From Friday night through Saturday night, I'm with my family, and everyone knows it. Committee chairmen know that I'm not going to show up on Sabbath, so I don't feel any pressure. It helps keep things in balance.

In spite of all the activity, we always find time to have family worship every night. It's important for our kids to hear the Bible stories, not just from Sabbath school teachers, but also from us. They need to see how important God is to us

from our actions. Sharing my faith with the kids is a very important form of ministry. Going through *Our Little Friend* and the lesson interests them in religious things, and teaches them to enjoy studying the Bible. Looking back at my childhood, family worship times are some of the most memorable, and I hope to pass these moments onto my children.

■ *What are your future goals?*

Some people ask if it is possible to be successful in politics when you're a maverick who is always trying to reform the system. I suppose they think of success as moving on to the Senate or becoming governor, but I have a simple response: I'm going to strive to be as successful as God wants me to be, and certainly no less. As long as I'm where God wants me to be, that's fine with me. I will just do my best, session by session, election by election, and leave the rest to God. It's a tremendously refreshing approach because it gives you a sense of freedom knowing that God is working in your life. I suppose Joseph had second thoughts when he had done everything right in Potiphar's home and yet landed in prison. Daniel had a similar story. But as we can see from these stories, God is always at work. I don't know if a person can be the kind of legislator I've tried to be and make it at the state or national level. We just have to let history unfold.

Interview by Michael Peabody.

Michael Peabody is a student of law at Pepperdine University, Malibu, California. His address: Pepperdine University; 24255 Pacific Coast Highway #41; Malibu, California 90263-0041; U.S.A. E-mail: mike@i-empire.com

Representative David Pendleton's address: Office of Minority Whip; State Capitol, Room 327; Honolulu, Hawaii 96813; U.S.A. E-mail: reppendleton@capitol.hawaii.gov

Facing our giants

By Leslie N. Pollard

It is not if we will face them, but where, when, and how we will face them!

He is 7'4", weighs 520 lbs., and wears very large shoes. Andre the Giant, the unapologetic showman of the World Wrestling Federation, cuts a frightening figure. The sheer bulk of the man, his towering and overwhelming appearance, strikes terror into the hearts of anyone who dares him in the wrestling ring. Whether he is burying the Undertaker, drop kicking the Russian, or hammering the Junk Yard Dogs, Andre's performance, as evidenced by his boisterous fan following, is great entertainment. And that's all it is!

But the giants we face are real: philosophic, educational, financial, personal, or professional giants. They loom across our landscape, darken our vision, threaten our stability, and endanger our future.

The giants that challenge us

Consider some of the philosophic giants that challenge the way we think and live.

Secular humanism is one. It asserts that humanity is the creator and arbiter of its own destiny. It parades around our campuses in the guise of scientific objectivity. It says: "Let go of your religious presuppositions and accept the 'indisputable' outcomes of scientific empiricism. There is nothing supernatural about the world. Everything that we see can be explained by cause and effect." At first this giant seems insurmountable to the Adventist student. After all, how do we challenge years of hard-core Darwinism with nothing more than an open Bible?

Another giant we face is *moral relativism*. This giant says, "Morality is what-

ever meets your needs. There's no absolute moral code. Do whatever makes you happy." This giant parades around university campuses in the guise of student discovery. Reinforced by the hedonism of the campus party circuit, it seduces the young and the restless, the lonely and the isolated.

Materialism is another oppressive giant. Students are led to see education not as a means of greater service, but as a means of material acquisition. The car, the house, the clothes—these make up "the good life."

These are just a few of the giants we face in life, but the fact to remember is not *if* we will face them, but where, when, and how we will face them! Perhaps the story of David and his giant will give us some help.

David and his giant

David was just a shepherd boy, youngest in a family of eight sons. He knew his sheep. He knew his harp. He could sing. But he was hardly a match for Goliath—that giant who stood 9 feet tall, weighed possibly 850 pounds, was a fighter from his boyhood, and whose bellicose threats sent shivers of naked fear down the spines of the Israelite army. The bronze armor that Goliath wore weighed some 125 pounds—perhaps more than David's body weight. Goliath loomed over Israel's horizon like a man-mountain of fighting technology.

Sometimes we too must face our Goliaths. Yours might be the Goliath of an abused childhood. Or it might be the Goliath of an unhappy marriage, or a broken family. Or it might be the Goliath of a deteriorating financial situa-

tion, or the untimely loss of a parent, or worse yet, the death of a child! Goliath meets us when our challenges outstrip our resources—when we are out-matched and outgunned. Goliath is real!

In the name of the Lord

Goliath showed up every day. He was the symbol of the Philistine might against Israel. Every day, for 40 days, he stood on a hill overlooking the encampments of the Israelites, and shouted out his defiance. Israel stood helpless. So did her king Saul. The name of Yahweh was being blasphemed and defied.

David heard the blasphemy. He saw the giant. He proposed to Saul: "Who is this giant that defies the armies of the living God? I'll take him on." Saul could only pity the boy. But David had a résumé of courage. A lion. A bear. And above all, the Spirit of the Lord. "I can strike down this uncircumcised Philistine."

David's response tells us where to meet our giants—at the intersection of courage and competence. Courage is a leadership quality that we all need. Courage is the willingness to face our challenges without fear. Competence is the skill needed to overcome our giants. Courage without competence is bravado. Competence without courage is temerity. Facing our giants requires both. In the challenges that face us, we must be both bold and skilled. The giants of humanism, relativism, and materialism cannot overcome our personal experience with God! We must show the bankruptcy of these ideas, but that can only be done from the platform of a living Christian experience.

When David says, "I will go," Saul dresses him in his kingly armor. But David says, "I cannot go in these . . . I am not used to them." So he takes them off. He says, "I can only meet my giant in my own personality and style. I cannot be you, oh, king. I must be myself." Here is revealed how we are to meet our giants—in secure self-confidence.

We should be secure about what we offer to the people that we serve. We are Seventh-day Adventists. This means we have a strong religious heritage that sets us apart from the larger society. While we must love our non-churched friends, we are not called to imitate them. The reality of our calling does not make us better than others; instead, it makes us more responsible than others. When we meet our fellow students, they know that we are Seventh-day Adventists and they expect that the signs, symbols, statements, and standards of our faith are distinguishable. In our fight against our giants, identity issues must be decisively resolved.

Back to the story. The moment arrives. Young David approaches the Philistine. Goliath hisses in disdain at David: "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" David replies: "You come at me with a sword and a spear. I come to you in the name of the Lord God Almighty."

Assurance first

David's statement reveals when to meet our giants. We must meet our giants only after we have the assurance that God is with us. When Goliath bolts from behind the Philistine lines brandishing all of his technology, our little David runs toward Goliath to meet him. This is our little David, who will later say, "I will lift my eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord."

This is our David who will later sing, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers."

This is our David who will later affirm, "I trust in the Lord" for "the Lord

is my shepherd."

With an assurance born of the presence of God, David runs toward Goliath. They meet in the center ring. Goliath lumbers forward, incredulous, vomiting out curses at our shepherd boy. Goliath curses David "by all the gods of his knowledge."¹ Things probably don't look good for David. Many in the crowd have already planned David's funeral.

But God has chosen David. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

David reaches into his satchel, grabs a sling stone, snaps out his leather sling, and advances toward the mighty giant. Goliath lifts his helmet in his white-hot rage. As he lifts his helmet, David releases that stone and it slices through the air, and bites into the forehead of the Philistine's massive head. The Philistine lumbers forward, his whole body trembles, as if invaded by a hive of alien impulses. His convulsing body now stiffens as he falls to the ground. Is this the man that made the armies of Israel tremble? Is this the man that defied the armies of Israel? Yes, this is the man! Dead from a single shot of a shepherd's sling. Suddenly a shout of victory explodes from the camp of Israel.

Meet it!

I will never forget how my now deceased mother faced her giant. I remember the day she told me the news. We had gathered at Oakwood College for my younger brother's graduation. She asked me to take her for a ride to the park. When we arrived at the park, she said that there was something that she wanted to tell me. She said, "Les, I went to the doctor the other day and he told me that he had some news for me that was not good. He told me that the lump in my breast was cancerous. So take care of yourself, and look out for your younger brother."

When I heard the word *cancerous* I could not contain myself. Sudden pain gripped my heart, welled up into my eyes, and rolled down my cheeks. And I

will never forget what she said: "Les, don't cry. You know that we did not come here to stay. The Lord has given me a good life. He's told me that it will be all right. One day we will all meet in heaven, and then we will never part again."

Ellen White tells of a vision. She saw the church as an old travel-weary ship, coming up a mighty iceberg. The night is cold, the iceberg is massive, the waters are murky, the travelers are frightened. Then a voice from heaven says, "Meet it!"²

That's God's word to you and me. Meet your giants at the intersection of courage, competence, and commitment. Meet them with security and self-confidence. Meet them after you have the assurance that God is with you.

Leslie N. Pollard (D. Min., Claremont School of Theology) is the vicepresident of the office of diversity at Loma Linda University. His address: Loma Linda University; Loma Linda 92354; California; U.S.A.

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Laugh and be healthy

by Sarah Uffindell

*“A merry heart doeth good like
a medicine” (Proverbs 17:22).*

My friend was getting married. The entire weekend promised to be full of fun. But when I reached the airport, the passengers were already on board and the plane was ready to leave. I was desperate. Two friends in tow, we ran to the gate. We literally begged the gate attendant to somehow let me on the flight. The wedding was too important, and it couldn't wait. After a few frowns and a mumbled call to the captain, the attendant offered to reopen the door but with one condition: My baggage would have to come on a later flight. But what if the baggage didn't get on time? Now I was even more desperate: How could I be the bridesmaid with all the clothes in the suitcase? Even before I could explain my plight to the attendant, my friends came to my rescue. I stood horrified to see underclothes and other personal belongings

floating into a huge clear plastic bag. I rushed aboard the plane, with my purse in one hand and my plastic nightmare on the other.

Life is such. We find ourselves by accident or by our own making in situations that threaten our sanity or test our humor. If we resist the former and try the latter, life would be so much fun. Humor leaves us with a taste of happiness: life seems good, problems are minimized, colors look brighter, and all heaven seems to smile. Did not Solomon say, “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine”?

That was some three thousand years ago. Now, research shows that the wise man's saying was not just a “good quip,” but a scientific truth.

The immune system

But first a word about how the body's immune system works. The immune system fights disease and is controlled by neurotransmitters that are made and released by the nervous system. The nervous system is of two kinds: sympathetic and parasympathetic. If someone yells your name as you doze off in class or church, you suddenly become alert, vessels constrict, pupils dilate, and your heart beats faster. This is a sympathetic reaction.

The sympathetic system is designed for utility in short, unsustained periods. If it were constantly revving in high gear, negative effects would result. Like under stress. Stress can cause high blood pressure, damaging blood vessel walls. It can also constrict blood vessels, further narrowing the blood flow. When muscles do not receive sufficient blood and



Make a fuss. This is the coffee
Susan's Home Ec class made today.

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oxygen, we feel pain, and the muscle slowly dies. In the case of a muscle like the heart, we have a heart attack.

Such physical results, associated with the sympathetic nervous system, occur because neurotransmitters, like epinephrine and dopamine, are released en masse in the body under certain circumstances—like when you are under stress or when someone yells your name when you are dozing.

Here's where laughter has a healing role to play. Laughing reduces the levels of epinephrine and dopamine, thus lessening the time and effect of these neurotransmitters. This also decreases the amount of circulating cortisol, which is a natural immune system suppressant that makes the body more susceptible to disease. Without this suppressing effect, the immune system can fight infection more successfully.

Laughter and the immune system

The immune system consists of white blood cells that fight infection. Does laughter have any influence on these cells? Dr. L. S. Berk and his research team decided to find out. They studied the effect of laughter on three kinds of white blood cells: lymphocytes, granulocytes, and monocytes. The research involved a group of participants who were shown a humorous video that produced mirthful laughter. Blood levels of various leukocytes were measured before, during, soon after, and even the next day after watching the video and laughing out loud. They found that white blood cells and their products increased during laughter and that this statistically significant increase often extended into the next day, implying that the effect may be long term. Significant increase was noted in lymphocyte products such as natural killer cells and gamma interferon that specifically attack viral and tumor cells. Also increased were antibodies, which are B-lymphocyte products that provide im-

munity against certain diseases. Such increases improve the overall immune system function. More studies are continuing to show positive outcomes of laughter.

Laugh, and get back to normal

Not so long ago, I was almost out of focus. I had been on duty at the hospital all night. I felt very tired. I had lost much sleep. Just as the long night ended, my pager buzzed. I noted a very familiar phone number. I rang, and got a recording. I tried again, and got the answering machine once again. Both the number and the voice seemed familiar, but I couldn't put a face to them. Anyway, I left a message. About four hours later, a friend called me and asked me to listen to the messages on my machine. When I did, I couldn't help but burst out laughing: the phone number and the voice on the machine were my own! The laughter took all my stress away. I was ready to face the day.

The more I study and experience the relation between our emotions and the immune system, the more I concur with David that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made." Someone has well said, "Laugh and the world laughs with you; weep and you weep alone." I'd rather be with the world free from stress, at the prime of health.

Sarah Uffindell (M.D., Loma Linda University) is a resident at Loma Linda University Medical Center specializing in neurology. Her postal address: 11160 Bellair St., Apt. 1; Loma Linda, California 92354; U.S.A.

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Edegar Link: 20; male; single; a native of Brazil, studying theology; interests: music, nature, reading, volleyball, and evangelism; correspondence in Portuguese, German, Spanish or English. Address: Universidad Adventista de Chile; Casilla 7-D; Chillan; CHILE.

Elsie D. Macalooloy: 27; female; single; holds a degree in secondary education from Philippine Normal University, now teaching; hobbies: listening to religious music, piano playing, hiking, and camping; correspondence in English. Address: Forest Hills Academy; Bayugan 1; Agusan Sur; 8502 PHILIPPINES.

Mary Jane Villanueva Magbanua: 27; female; single; teaches biology; hobbies: gardening and housekeeping; correspondence in Tagalog or English. Address: Malandag; Malungon, Sarangani Province; 9503 PHILIPPINES.

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sharing my faith; correspondence in Spanish or English. Address: Universidad Adventista de Chile; Casilla 7-D; Chillan; CHILE.

Rocio Ortega B.: 29; female; single; a teacher; interests: classical and Christian music, singing, swimming, working with youth in the church, and camping; correspondence in Spanish or English. Address: Nya Radstugugatan 2; 602 24 Norrkoping; SWEDEN. E-mail: <rochy@hotmail.com>

Linah Osiemo: 22; female; single; a native of Kenya studying toward a master degree in microbial technology; interests: singing, cooking, sports, adventure, and debating; correspondence in English. Address: Microbiology Department; Guru Nanak Dev University; Amristar 143005; INDIA.

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Loida L. Plama: 30; female; single; a secretary at a law office; hobbies: singing, playing the guitar and the organ, travel, gardening, and cooking; correspondence in English. Address: Tumamak-Larrazabal Law Office; 2nd. Floor, Park & Shop Building; Lopez Jaena St.; Ormoc City; 6541 PHILIPPINES.

Alicia Rodilla Ruiz: 26; female; single; completed a master in educational counseling; interests: helping others, sharing Christian experiences, travel, reading, and praying; correspondence in English, French or Spanish. Address: C. Solsona No. 3; Badalo-

na, Barcelona; 08914 SPAIN.

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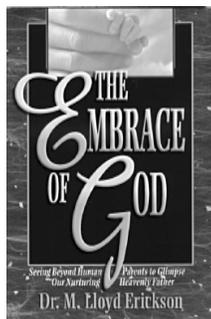
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Francisco Villa M.: 19; male; single; studying computer systems; interests: travel, exchanging postcards, basketball, and swimming; correspondence in Spanish or English. Address: Av. Lazaro Cardenas No. 1048; Col. Sat. H. Cardenas, Tabasco; MEXICO.

Cecile Vinoya: 20; female; single; studying toward a degree in physical therapy; interests: music, poetry, and sports; correspondence in English or Filipino. Address: Manila Sanitarium and Hospital; 1975 Donada St.; Pasay City, Metro Manila; 1300 PHILIPPINES.

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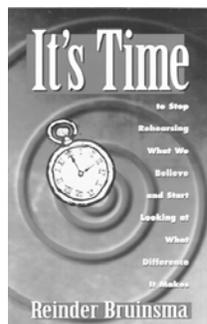
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The Embrace of God: Seeing Beyond Human Parents to Glimpse Our Nurturing Heavenly Father,

by M. Lloyd Erickson (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1996; 219 pp.; paperback).

Reviewed by Víctor A. Korniejczuk.



It's Time To Stop Rehearsing What We Believe and Start Looking at What Difference It Makes

by Reinder Bruinsma (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1998; 159 pp.; paperback).

Reviewed by G. T. Ng

God is loving. God is caring. God is consistent. God is our Father. God is our Friend. Welcome to the real God of the Bible, introduced by Melvin Lloyd Erickson in *The Embrace of God*.

The author takes images of meaningful human relations and uses them to reflect upon the Father in heaven. The task is a delicate one; it guards against reducing God to ordinary human images, and at the same time it makes God someone we can relate to.

Dr. Erickson is equal to the task. As a trained counselor committed to biblical norms and values, the author paints a picture of God that rises above the distortions that the human parental profile has imposed on our way of thinking and feeling about God. While it is necessary to experience God's "hugs" ("the embrace"), the author insists, we must also see God as a Father who desires to have a personal experience with us.

The author repeatedly refers to the need many adults have of recovering from traumatic situations experienced in childhood as victims of abusive, neglectful, or absent parents. He includes a list of therapeutic resources helpful for healing the open wounds some people have had since their childhood.

Erickson's profile of God is in line with the biblical concept of God. He selects divine traits that guide the reader to experience God's hugs. After all, the author is not writing a systematic doctrine of God, but portraying God as a Father and a Friend to whom a person in trouble can turn to. However, the author's perspective is quite balanced in that he shows that God is not permissive, and He disciplines us because He loves us. "Discipline is part of His work in us" (p. 117).

The Embrace of God is an easy-reading book. It is full of real-life illustrations: the fragile and the inconsistent human relationships are contrasted with the rich and rewarding experiences one can have, if those relations are anchored to God. The book is useful not only as a tool in counseling work, but also in experiencing the real embrace of God.

Victor A. Korniejczuk (Ed.D., Andrews University) teaches graduate courses in education at Universidad de Montemorelos. His address: Universidad de Montemorelos; Apartado 16; Montemorelos; N.L. 67500; Mexico.

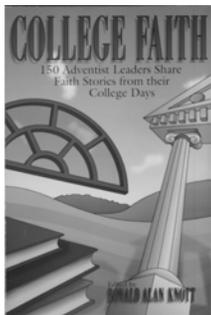
Reinder Bruinsma, currently the secretary of the Trans-European Division of Seventh-day Adventists, has been concerned for years about the impact (or the lack of it) of Adventism on the lives of church members. There seems to be a yawning gap between being and doing. The dichotomy between what he calls "orthodoxy" and "orthopraxis" is disconcerting. Professing and living seem to be unrelated. The process of indoctrination has not had much effect on the lives of believers. Doctrine, albeit correct and straight, has failed to transform lives.

The author approaches the problem by showing how each tenet of truth can make a difference in our lives. Systematically, he examines each of the 27 Fundamental Beliefs of our church, extracts personal meaning for living, and shows how these beliefs have practical implications for everyday living. In the process, doctrines become relevant.

The book is well organized and the subject matter of each chapter is clearly delineated. The author's popular style of writing is easy to follow, with many personal experiences. However, the book seems to suffer from verbosity, from the title to its content. The 11-page introductory chapter, for example, could have been summarized in a couple of pages. The chapter on the Bible does not adequately deal with the transforming power of the Word. Nor does the author give enough emphasis to the implications of the spiritual new birth.

The problem of professing and living may be more complex than solely a doctrinal issue. The traditional doctrine-oriented approach of preparing baptismal candidates may be a contributing factor. The emphasis has been on indoctrination at the expense of discipleship. Should not the church pay equal attention to getting people baptized and to teaching new believers how to live in post-baptismal discipleship? To that extent, the book has made a valuable contribution.

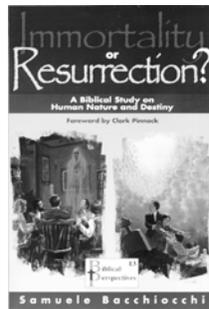
G. T. Ng (Th.D., Andrews University) is the dean of the Theological Seminary at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS). His postal address: P.O. 7682, Domestic Airport Post Office; Pasay City, Metro Manila; Philippines.



College Faith,
edited by Ronald Alan Knott (Boise, Idaho:
Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1995; 192 pp.;
paperback).

More College Faith,
edited by Ronald Alan Knott (Berrien
Springs, Michigan: Worthy Books, 1997;
224 pp.; paperback).

Reviewed by Humberto M. Rasi.



**Immortality or Resurrection: A
Biblical Study on Human Nature
and Destiny,**
by Samuele Bacchiocchi (Berrien Springs,
Mich.: Biblical Perspectives, 1997; 304 pp.;
paperback).

Reviewed by Aecio Cairus.

Shirley Parks has aptly called young adulthood, particularly when spent in an academic setting, “the critical years”—the period in life when major decisions are made regarding our relationship with God, our future profession, and the selection of our life companion. Ronald Alan Knott—a freelance author and film producer—invited 150 Adventist leaders and professionals, mostly from North America, to share a turning point in their lives as college or university students and to connect that event with a Bible passage. The result is *College Faith*, a memorable collection of personal testimonies of lessons learned in the context of a religious, humorous, romantic or even tragic experience.

More College Faith, published two years later, expands the repertoire with 150 additional stories written by a different group of authors, many of whom are also well-known in Adventist circles. This time the experiences are organized in 15 sections of 10 testimonies each. Crisply written and edited, these moving stories tell of perseverance, providence, temptation, prayer, forgiveness, and, above all, the gracious guiding hand of God.

These two volumes have been distributed widely among students and teachers in North American Division colleges and universities.

If you wish to be encouraged and uplifted for 300 days, get these two books and read a story and a verse each day as your morning devotional. Whether you are a student or a young professional, you will be spiritually energized and ready to face whatever surprise life may present to you that day.

Humberto M. Rasi (Ph.D., Stanford University) is editor-in-chief of *Dialogue* and education director for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Publishers' addresses: Pacific Press, P. O. Box 5353; Nampa, Idaho 83653-5353; U.S.A. Worthy Books, 6670 Steeplechase Lane; Berrien Springs; Michigan 49103; U.S.A.

The author of *From Sabbath to Sunday* and other popular volumes returns to examine another pillar of the Adventist faith. The book focuses on an issue current in theological debate, particularly in the evangelical world: Is the soul innately immortal? Will God punish the wicked forever and ever? Many scholars have come out from their theological closet and have spoken out courageously that the traditional Christian teaching on this subject is not biblical and is based more on Platonic views. The author provides a review of this debate, even as he reaffirms the biblical and the Adventist perspectives on the issue.

While *From Sabbath to Sunday* contributed distinctive views on the origin of Sunday observance, *Immortality or Resurrection* breaks little or no new ground in its area, as compared with Adventist classics such as *Questions on Doctrine* or L. E. Froom's *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers*. It does have the advantage over them of addressing a single subject within an easily manageable size (304 pages). It also reviews contemporary non-Adventist authors who have abandoned the traditional views in favor of the biblical position.

Though generally well edited, some mistakes mar the content. Two partially overlapping introductions are used. For over a score of times, the term *flesh* is rendered in Hebrew by *bashar*. No such Hebrew word exists, and the transliteration should have no “h.” Also, historical sources should have been checked more carefully. Among “Current Jewish Concepts” (p. 175) “that illuminate the parable of the rich man and Lazarus,” Bacchiocchi finds that “especially revealing is the ‘Discourse to the Greeks Concerning Hades,’ written by Josephus, the famous Jewish historian who lived during New Testament times (died about A.D. 100).” But this work is no longer attributed to Josephus, and can hardly be described as “current” or “Jewish,” since it quotes from many New Testament books.

Nonetheless, *Immortality or Resurrection* is commendable for its clarity of exposition and wide scope, covering more than 200 specific topics under the overall framework of the biblical doctrine of human nature.

Aecio E. Cairus (Ph.D., Andrews University) is dean of the School of Theology at Universidad Adventista del Plata.

Understanding Hinduism

by Edison Samraj

The first step toward a dialogue with Hindus

If you ever wanted to have an intellectually stimulating dialogue, pick India. Forget the dust, the dirt, and the multitudes of people. Travel in a train, first class. As the train picks up speed, turn to a neighbor. He may be a businessman, a college professor, a politician, or just anybody. But if he is a Hindu, you've got it. He can keep you engaged all the way, talking about life, death, and something thereafter, about mysticism and the origin of nuclear science in ancient Hindu Scriptures. At the end of the journey, your travel would have escaped boredom and embraced nothing.

There, you've got it. Hinduism is everything. Hinduism is nothing. Don't take that literally. Take it philosophically. One of the ancient religions of the world, its adherents number nearly 800 million, and live around the world. Hinduism is not simply a religion: It is a complex system of beliefs forged into a path of accommodation; it is an ocean of beliefs that are now coherent, now complementary, and now contradictory. It may not have an answer to every question, but it certainly has a question for every answer.

For a Christian, that poses a fundamental problem. How do Christians communicate their beliefs and values to a Hindu? Not easy, but we can have a try. To begin with, we need to understand five basic questions before we can unravel the enigma of the Hindu mind.

Did the world evolve?

Hindus believe that the world evolved through successive stages. Matter came first. Then came consciousness, intelligence, and finally spirituality. At

one end of the cosmic spectrum there is pure matter and at the other end is pure spirit. In between is time. In the matter the spirit is dormant; and in the spirit the matter is dormant. The richness of any given existence depends upon the proportion of the spirit in the matter: The higher the spirit, the lower the matter, and the richer the existence. The reverse is true as well. The spirit appears in many forms: as elementary life in vegetables, as consciousness in animals, as intelligence in humans, and as bliss in the supreme spirit. So there is a gradual ascent from matter to life, from life to consciousness, from consciousness to reason, and from reason to spiritual perfection. In relation to the supreme spirit, a human being is nearer than an animal, an animal than a plant, a plant than a rock. In the same way a saint is nearer to the supreme being than a rogue.

Thus, the universe is a vast amphitheater in which there is a colossal struggle going on between spirit and matter, giving rise to various orders of being ranging from the lifeless stone to the omniscient supreme being.

How is society organized?

Hinduism defines the ideal social system as *varnadharma*—a concept that came to India with the invading Aryans from central Asia, years before the common era. *Varna* means color and *dharma* means duty, and the social fabric woven by the early Aryans in northern India eventually gave birth to a caste system, so fundamental to the understanding of Hinduism. The fair-skinned Aryans divided society into four castes, according to duties performed by each group in a

society. Those who did not fit into any of these castes and their sub-castes of color and duty became the untouchables of society. The inner contradiction of the caste system has been a perennial source of tension within the Hindu society and a point of contact for other religions that seem to profess the dignity of the human being without any distinction. But the point of contact has not always been successful because of the overwhelming power of the caste in subsuming any claims to the contrary.

How do we understand salvation?

Thirdly, Hindus hold that life is controlled by the proposition of spiritual progression, with the ultimate goal being *moksha*, liberation or salvation. To Hindus, *moksha* is not only liberation from the bondage of the flesh, but also from the limitations of finiteness. *Moksha* means becoming one with the perfect spirit. The approach to this ultimate goal involves a deliberate crushing of the animal wants of the body and the eventual fusion of the individual with the godhead, thus escaping from the cycle of rebirth. The journey to the ultimate may take aeons and millions of rebirths, but it is cyclic and continuous, functioning under the law of *karma*.

What is karma and rebirth?

Karma is the most characteristic and the most important doctrine of Hinduism. Karma is the moral law of causation. Just as the law of cause and effect works in the physical world, the law of karma works in the moral world. A cut causes a finger to bleed; likewise, if one steals, that act adversely affects one's moral nature to the extent that many

acts of goodness may be needed to counterbalance one act of evil. Similarly, many existences may be needed to take care of the evil of one existence, and the cycle is almost eternal. According to the law of karma, we pass through a series of lives either on this earth or somewhere else before we obtain *moksha*, that is, liberation or salvation. The series of lives are known as reincarnation—giving us both a predicament and a possibility; the former because what we do in one life affects what we may be in the next; the later because the way to *moksha* has unlimited possibilities. The process goes through many lives, the individual sliding up or down.

How does one attain *moksha*?

Hinduism suggests three ways of attaining liberation or salvation: *karma*, *gnana*, and *bhakthi*, meaning good works, knowledge, and devotion. The way of *karma* is for people of action. They attain union with the supreme through disinterested service. The way of knowledge is for people of contemplation. Knowledge is power, and its power can comprehend the ultimate reality and lead one to unity with the supreme. The yoking of intelligence is far superior to action and the yoked intelligence has the power to cast away both good and evil. The way of devotion is superior to the other two, and it enables the mind to fix on the supreme one. Devotees deliver themselves to God, who takes pity on them and assures them salvation. To develop and maintain this essential religious attitude, one ought to be constantly engaged in the service and worship of God, devoting body and mind to the service of God.

The Hindu worldview

Having seen the basic approaches of Hinduism to issues of life's origin and destiny, what kind of a worldview do we see in this ancient religion? First, it is a worldview based on a polytheistic and

pantheistic concept of god. While Hindus subscribe to many gods and many lords and have the option of choosing a favorite deity, they also hold to the doctrine of omnipresence to its ultimate meaning—that is, gods exist everywhere, out there, and in here. Philosophically, Hindus find themselves with the luxury of worshiping different gods for different purposes for different occasions and by different people. This doctrine of the multiplicity of gods is at the root of tolerance and accommodation, so much a part of the Hindu worldview and culture.

Second, the Hindu worldview looks at the cosmos as in a process of continual evolution from matter to life to consciousness to intelligence and finally to spirituality. Attaining that final spirituality is ultimate salvation, solely through one's own attempts. Salvation is to be worked out by a life of good works, knowledge, or devotion. Each person works through this process even as each struggles with the law of karma, within the tension of fatalism on the one hand and liberation on the other, and within the parameters of rebirth and reincarnation. The ultimate salvation is the handiwork of the individual.

Third, the Hindu worldview has a caste system at the core of its sociology. The concept of caste places differing values on human beings and shuts away a vast number of people outside of its privilege and dignity.

The Christian worldview

The Christian worldview is drastically different. It has its grounding in a personal God who created the cosmos and all that is in it. The concept of divine creation not only strikes at the root of materialistic evolution and all its accompanied deviations, but also places the human being within the context of a God who loves, cares, and saves. So men and women are not only the handiwork of God but also the objects of His grace, continually sought by Him to be

saved from sin. Thus salvation is not a human accomplishment, but a divine gift to be accepted by humans. We are not tied by a law of karma or destined to go through the endless cycle of reincarnation, but we are invited to accept God's gift of salvation through faith in His redemptive work accomplished by Jesus. In the Christian worldview, life has meaning and history moves to its destiny when God will bring an end to sin, suffering, and death and establish a new earth of righteousness and peace.

The Hindu and Christian worldviews

Any understanding of the Hindu mind will inevitably lead to a comparison of the Hindu and Christian worldviews. Such a comparison leads to some broad contrasts and understandings.

1. *The concept of God.* While polytheism and pantheism form the framework of the Hindu concept of God, the Christian worldview anchors its belief in a monotheistic concept. In fact, it reinforces such a position by its account of Creation. Monotheism presupposes that there is one God and that one God is the prime mover of the world. This concept is diametrically opposed to the Hindu worldview, in which God is impersonal and non-relational, whereas the Christian concept of God is personal and relational.

2. *The concept of origins.* The Hindu thought sustains the position of evolution, which is embraced by some Christians. However, Christians who accept the account of Genesis as historical and true cannot but reject evolution as an option in the understanding of origins. The Bible unequivocally suggests that "by the word of the Lord were the heavens made." Of course, to accept that affirmation is an act of faith, but then any religious experience is a faith experience. Moreover, while the Hindu acceptance of evolution makes god and nature contiguous (hence, pantheistic), the Christian denial of evolution and affirmation of Creation place God and

nature ontologically discontinuous. Hence God for a Christian stands above nature and in judgment of it so far as sin's intrusion is concerned.

3. *The concept of salvation.* To Hindus, salvation comes as a result of their choice—by good works, knowledge, or devotion. Human aptitudes and activities decide salvation. The Christian concept of salvation is singular: to accept and follow Jesus who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." The significant difference between the Hindu concept of *moksha* and the Christian concept of salvation is the difference be-

tween what I am and whose I am: Is my life controlled and governed from birth by an impersonal force or am I a child of God, created in His image and pursued by His grace? Further, Hinduism argues that karma decides one's destiny; that is, actions determine one's ultimate end. Biblical Christianity, on the other hand, maintains that faith in a personal God decides one's destiny. So faith is basic and critical to one's spiritual survival as a Christian.

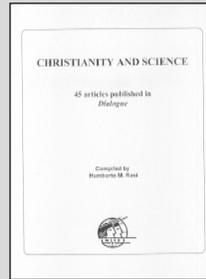
4. *The concept of freedom.* The law of karma gives fatalism a crucial role in the Hindu dogma. Fatalism is the belief that

your destiny as a being has been predetermined by a power that is higher than you. Hindus attribute negative experiences or positive achievements to one's fate. So life is programmed, determined, and worked out long before you were born. This fatalism negates any freedom in the attainment of salvation. The Christian concept of freedom cannot be explained or described philosophically. This freedom has to be experienced. It is freedom from sin. It is not freedom to merge with the divine, but freedom to be liberated from the enslaving power of sin in order to live at peace with God and fellow human beings.

Special Offer: Two New Publications

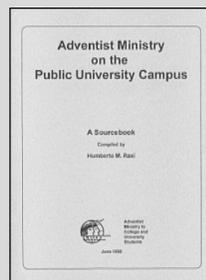
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This 190-page book includes 45 articles previously published in *Dialogue*. Grouped under five approaches—philosophical, theological, scientific, ethical, and personal—the collection is an important contribution by Adventist authors to the continuing dialogue between Christians and the world of science. Available in English or Spanish. Price: US\$10.00, which includes the cost of regular mail. To obtain a free copy, see "To order."



Adventist Ministry on the Public University Campus

This 293-page sourcebook contains useful ideas on how to start, lead, and strengthen the nurture and outreach activities of Adventist students in non-Adventist colleges and universities. The material covers a variety of topics such as a sample constitution for a student association, plans for action, how to face Sabbath problems, how to relate to believers of other faiths, etc. This volume is available only in English. Subsidized price: US\$10.00, which includes the cost of regular mail. To obtain a free copy, see "To order."



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If you subscribe to *Dialogue* for two years (US\$24.00; 6 issues; airmail), you may request a free copy of one of the two books advertised here. To take advantage of this special offer, follow the same order procedure outlined above.

Sharing the Word

From what we have seen, the scenario of our train journey can be quite fascinating. The Hindu belief system is very complex, with a philosophy and logic of its own. To approach a believer in that system with the Christian gospel or even to carry on a dialogue with that person is not simple or easy. However, Hinduism is not a closed system; it is open, tolerant, and accommodative. It raises and tries to answer questions that are common to the human race. And on that level we can carry on a dialogue. But we cannot approach the task with an intellectual arrogance or a superiority of any kind. The task requires understanding, humility, and respect. It also demands our subservience to the Holy Spirit, who is able to reach any heart with the message of love that the Creator has for each human being. Above all, the task demands a life that totally reflects the claims of the gospel, so that what Mahatma Gandhi once said may indeed come true: "Show me a Christian, and I will become one."

Edison Samraj (Ph.D., University of Pune, India) is chief editor of the Oriental Watchman Publishing House. His address: Oriental Watchman Publishing House, Post Box 1417, Pune 4411037; India.

A man, a dream, and a postage stamp

October 29, 1971 dawned as usual, but for Milton Murray it burst forth with a vision. For years, Murray has been the architect of philanthropy and fund raising for the medical and educational institutions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A philanthropist himself, he has spent year after year building relationships with the great and the small of the United States and other countries, inspiring them to give generously for causes that build community, share the goodness of the Lord, and make life a little better for millions. So on this October day, he sat down at his office typewriter and wrote a letter—the first in a series urging the United States Postal Service to issue a stamp celebrating philanthropy and honoring the thousands of men and women who serve their community, nation, and the world at large through their generosity.

The vision paid off—27 years later. On October 7, 1998, with a smiling Milton Murray in attendance, the U.S. Postal Service released in Atlanta, Georgia, a 32-cent first class postage stamp, with the inscription: "Giving & Sharing: An American Tradition." Although the stamp is American, and although it underscores an American tradition, for people around the world, particularly Adventists, it is a reminder that true living consists of giving and sharing. After all, did not Heaven itself set the best example in giving through the greatest gift ever possible—Jesus?

Although Murray kept the pressure on the project, some 26 entities, including the General Conference, Adventist HealthCare, ADRA, and other denominational and other professionals and not-for-profit organizations marshaled every available source of strength to make the vision a reality. Leading citizens, college and university presidents,

compassion. Giving and sharing is one of life's most noble activities. Only the dead cannot.

Second, when we show concern for the well-being of others we become the eyes, hands, and feet of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Third, in giving, God is at work, and we must do our best because we do it for Him. Nothing helps our collective Adventist morale more than to know that others—our friends and neighbors—visualize us as being lights set upon a hill to illuminate the entire community, and to enlighten the path of many.

Finally, the philanthropy stamp calls upon Adventists never to withdraw from leadership in improving our communities. It took 27 years for Murray's idea to become a reality. Through one person, the church has contributed something to social awareness and

philatelic history. We should be looking for opportunities to serve others in ways that will engender curiosity and goodwill toward the church.

Thus, we encourage Adventists everywhere to capitalize on the stamp's appearance to emphasize giving and sharing. "Giving is religion in action."

Philatelists among Dialogue's readers who wish to know more about the philanthropy stamp may contact Milton Murray: 13032 Ingleside Drive; Beltsville, Maryland 20705; U.S.A. Fax: 301-572-5211 E-mail address: 74532.746@compuserve.com



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foundation executives, governors, senators, and Vice President Albert Gore wrote in support of Milton's vision.

To turn that vision into reality was not particularly easy. The U.S. Postal System receives a thousand or more letters urging commemorative stamps every week. At any given time, the post office has some 2,000 subjects on its agenda, and only about 35 or 40 new stamps are issued each year.

So, for the philanthropy stamp to be issued at all is a triumph for the cause of giving and sharing. The stamp carries a message of many dimensions to millions of people throughout the world.

First, there is the message of love and

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