

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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What size is your God?

**After the wedding
comes a marriage**

**Can we make sense
of suffering?**

**The 10/40 Window:
New mission
opportunities**

**Adventists
and birth control**



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Number

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Almost home

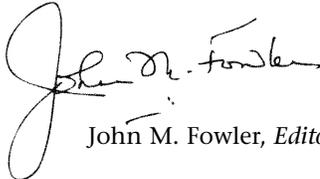
At the closing session of the World Congress of Seventh-day Adventists in Toronto on July 8, 2000, more than 60,000 guests along with 2,000 delegates from around the globe will unite their thoughts, their will, and their hope in affirming they are “almost home.” In this motto, the 57th session of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has captured the meaning, momentum, and mission of the movement that was launched in the wake of the turbulent events of 1844.

The meaning. “Home” immediately suggests that we are a family. We come from 205 of the 230 countries recognized by the United Nations. We publish in 272 languages and speak numberless dialects. Economy, education, and ethnicity sort us into a thousand little islands. But acceptance of the crucified Lord and anticipation of being with Him soon in fulfillment of His promise (John 14:1-3) make us one family, created by the grace of God and sustained by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. At the head of the family stands our Lord, and we as family members press forward to complete the mission given to us on earth.

The momentum. The Adventist family was born as a sequel to 1844—a date to remember. Some would see it as a date of disillusionment that resulted from prophetic speculation and miscalculation. But for us it is a date that created a movement—the birthing of a global family destined “to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thessalonians 4:17, KJV). The year 1844 is the last of the prophetic and historic mileposts that keep the family of God ever mindful of the coming great event toward which human events move with a steady momentum. Therefore, we are here to remind ourselves and tell the world at large that we are “almost home.”

When we say “almost home,” we are affirming three things. First, we live here, but our permanent home is not here. We study and work here, but our destiny is not here. Our destination is in the mansions that Christ has gone to prepare for us. Second, we are almost there. The journey of faith that began almost immediately after the fall of our first parents in Eden, when the heirs of the promise began looking for a city “which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10, KJV) is in its last lap. Third, it’s an awesome thought that we are part of that eschatological journey. The doors of eternity are about to open; the welcoming arms of the Savior are about to give us that hug from which there shall be no more separation.

The mission. While on that journey, we are not aimless wanderers. We are pilgrims with a mission—to proclaim that Jesus of the cross is coming again, to be ready to meet Him in peace, to develop by the grace of God a character modeled after Christ’s own, to heal the broken-hearted, to build the family of God, and to occupy till He comes.



John M. Fowler, *Editor*

Articles on creation

As a *Dialogue* subscriber, I want you to know how much I value the articles you publish on creation versus evolution. I used several of them during a recent meeting of the Adventist Youth Society in my church. The response was very positive. It is my hope that *Dialogue's* circle of readers will continue to expand around the world. Please use the enclosed check to renew my personal subscription.

Miriam Elizabeth Flores

Tegucigalpa
HONDURAS

The editors respond:

Thank you, Miriam, for your positive comments and support. Readers of our journal, including science students and teachers, will be interested to know that we have published our best articles on this topic in one volume under the title, *Christianity and Science*. The 189-page book is available in English, Portuguese, and Spanish. Cost: US\$10.00. Orders should be sent to: *Dialogue*; 12501 Old Columbia Pike; Silver Spring, Maryland 20904; U.S.A. Fax: 301-622-9627. E-mail: 110173.1405@compuserve.com Payment can be made by check or with VISA/MasterCard.

By contemplating we become changed

Given the innocuous title of Daniel Reynaud’s article on television and violence (*Dialogue* 12:1), I was surprised by its rather controversial content. I agree with his assertion that it’s easier to point the finger at a “lesser evil” (violence transmitted by television, than at evils hitting closer to home (for example, racism, sexism, obsession with wealth and appearance).

I found interesting the research suggesting that older children understand violence as an artificial code that is un-

Letters

acceptable in the real world. But I am not persuaded that violence on TV plays as little a role in real life violence as the author implies. True, “television is not the cause of social violence” (p. 27). However, it provides an exaggerated reflection of our current social ideology, which is a violent one. Television, movies, video games, and music filled with violence, both verbal and visual, contribute to the desensitization towards suffering and a devaluing of human life in our world. Although the changes wrought may not be immediately visible, they remain latent, ready to become manifest given the “right” situation. Indeed, to refer to the same Bible passage quoted by Reynaud, “it is by contemplating that we become changed” (2 Cor. 3:18).

Sylvia R. Gregorutti

Rutherford, California, U.S.A.

The author responds:

The purpose of the article was not to say that violent viewing has no effect, but that it has less effect than popularly believed, and has less effect than other influences that receive a fraction of the attention. The idea that media violence is a powerful influence is so entrenched that to suggest otherwise requires a detailed argument to support the case, hence my article. But this must not be read as the media having no effect—a point which I think is clear enough in my piece.

What I am asking for is a reasoned reconsideration of the emphasis placed on media violence which I feel usually leads to a smug ignorance of the other, more powerful, effects of media viewing. Drawing attention to the broken water main doesn't imply that a dripping tap is not a problem; it's simply a question of priorities.

Daniel Reynaud

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A much needed message

Thank you for the excellent articles that you include in *Dialogue* and especially for “Creation and a logical faith” (*Dialogue* 10:1). I think your journal is proclaiming a message that is much needed in today's world. It also speaks strongly to certain issues with which Adventists are grappling. Keep up the good work!

Greg A. King

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Challenged and encouraged

Among the very good material included in *Dialogue* 10:2, I was particularly challenged and encouraged by the article “Though the heavens fall,” by Greg

A. King. As the chaplain of the Adventist Medical Clinic in this city, I am confronted daily with the need to maintain my own biblical-ethical values in a world in which the supreme objective seems to achieve selfish goals regardless of the means. Indeed, secularism and moral relativism tempt us all. Our society needs desperately more young men and women who know who they are, why they are here, and where they are going—those whom God has called “out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

David Alberto Manrique

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We are not struggling alone

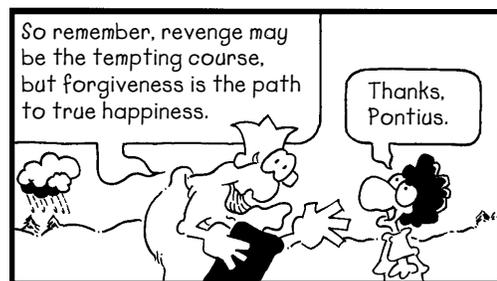
As a student of dentistry at Universidad Nacional de Tucumán, I wish to congratulate you for publishing *Dialogue*. This journal not only connects us as Adventist students across national boundaries, but also lets us know that we are not alone as we struggle to reach our professional goals while remaining true to our faith. It is so encouraging to know that there are thousands who share our religious convictions and our hope in the soon return of Jesus Christ to this earth. May God bless you abundantly!

Erica Paola Palacios

San Miguel de Tucumán

ARGENTINA

Pontius' Puddle



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Write to us!

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What size is your God?

by E. Theodore Agard

We cannot measure or fully understand God from the limited perspective of our intelligence.

Size is determined by units of measurement, and these units vary depending on the object we measure. Gold is measured in ounces or grams, coal in tons. Crude oil is shipped in terms of barrels, refined gasoline is sold as liters or gallons. The size of a box is measured by its length x width x height, in inches or centimeters, but carpeting a room requires square yards or meters. Yards are unsuitable to cite the distance between New York and Nairobi—we use miles or kilometers. But interplanetary distances call for light years, with one light year equal to the distance light travels in a year at a speed of 186,000 miles (300,000 km) per second. Almost unthinkable!

But how big is your God? Is He so far removed, so infinite that time and space mean nothing to Him? Is He so transcendent that we can acknowledge Him as the moral ground or the first cause of the universe, then leave Him alone to His grandeur and carry on our lives with no reference to His existence or demands? Or is He so near, so immanent, so involved in life and its myriad movements that He lives on that tree or is found in this stone or is a part of all that exists—kind of an ongoing pantheistic being, and make Him like one of us? Or do these thoughts matter at all?

To the Psalmist, the matter of God's size did matter. "Where can I go from your Spirit?" he asks. "Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold

me fast" (Psalm 139:7-10).^{*} Contemplate on this, and you have the concept of infinite—not the mathematical kind where infinity stands beyond reachability, but the spiritual dynamic, in which God can be at once transcendent and immanent, infinite but loving enough to identify with human needs and concerns. Hence David's wonder and contentment: God is in heaven—omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent—and yet caring enough to let His hand "hold me fast."

In this very wonder and contentment lies one of the great challenges a Christian faces in respect to God: the temptation to view God from the viewpoint of our limitations and question His power and might.

Resisting the temptation

But Christians who accept the Bible as the revelation of God to humanity are not without help in resisting such temptation. The Bible speaks of God's ultimate self-disclosure in the person of Jesus, in whom the finite and the infinite merge. In Him the divine and the human, the entirely Other and the One who identified with our weakness and frailty, came together to show that life can be lived in close relationship with God without diluting His magnificent infinitude.

Jesus demonstrated in His life, death, and resurrection the power of God. This power touched the lives of His disciples and transformed them. The timid and blundering Peter became a fearless preacher on the day of Pentecost. The doubting Thomas sought for a scientific evidence and a sensory proof, and when

the risen Jesus confronted him, he fell at His feet in humility, acknowledging, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

But the vacillation of Peter and the doubting of Thomas are not unique to them. Christians in every age seem to have difficulty believing all aspects of God's revelation if they cannot find acceptable support. For example, consider the prophetic words of Revelation 1:7: "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him." Some ask, How can everyone on earth see the coming of Jesus at the same time, given the fact that the earth is round? A scientific query indeed, but it ignores the fact that we are facing here a divine event, and God is not to be understood in terms of human limitations. Consider that even we humans have developed in our time the technological capacity to let a single event be viewed around the globe at the same time. I am not proposing that Christ will use satellites and TV

to broadcast His second coming. But I am suggesting that if finite beings have devised a system whereby an incident on this earth can be viewed simultaneously by all its inhabitants, why limit an infinite God from causing this to happen in whatever way He chooses? How big is your God?

God's power and creation

One area in which this problem of limiting God's power especially shows up is the origin of earth and life upon it. Many scientists assert that this earth—along with many galaxies and planets—resulted from the explosion of some mass of unknown origin, and life eventually evolved when the right conditions existed. But the theory of evolution is not as scientifically sound as many people are led to believe, and several scholarly works have pointed out the scientific problems in the theory of evolution. (See box.)

There is a basic philosophical difference between a scientist who supports evolution and one who believes in Creation. Science deals with natural phenomena. The theory of evolution explains the origin of this world and life within it, using the natural laws whose effects are observed in the world. The problem is that there are significant gaps that cannot be bridged by any known laws or observed phenomena. For example, the age-old question: "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" Every chicken is hatched from an egg, and every egg is laid by a chicken. The first chicken or first egg appearing by any other means was unnatural, to say the least! The Creation scientist points this out and says that science can deal only with natural laws that were set up as part of a supernatural Creation. This can be understood by comparing the manufacture and maintenance of a car. The tools that are quite satisfactory for servicing a car are inadequate for its manufacture. Scientific laws that sufficiently serve to understand the opera-

tion and maintenance of this world are inadequate to account for its origin.

The first law of thermodynamics deals with the conservation of energy. This law states that natural processes can neither create nor destroy energy, but may only convert energy from one form to another. This places an important limitation on nature. Since matter is a form of energy, nature cannot account for the total energy, including matter, in the universe. Hence the need for the supernatural. Could this supernatural be the Creator God, revealed to us more specifically by Jesus Christ?

Those who believe that the Bible is the revelation of God should not be surprised if any scientific determination of the age of the earth is inconsistent with the Creation story. The act of creation implies a supernatural event with a fully developed, mature earth with inhabitants at the end of Creation week. Any method of dating the earth scientifically involves assumptions of conditions and natural processes and will not yield results that would support a supernatural Creation base.

Since God has created this world supernaturally, no method of dating the earth scientifically even in Adam's time would have yielded a result consistent with Creation. The entrance of sin has changed the perspective of humanity and has placed a limitation on human understanding. This is where faith comes in. "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible....And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Hebrews 11:3, 6).

Caution needed

What we have seen so far warns us to be cautious in seeking, from our human

Recommended reading

- John F. Ashton. *In Six Days*. French's Forest, NSW, Australia: New Holland, 1999.
- Michael J. Behe. *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*. New York: Free Press, 1996.
- Harold C. Coffin and Robert H. Brown. *Origin by Design*. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1983.
- Michael Denton. *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*. Bethesda, Maryland: Adler and Adler, 1986.
- Duane T. Gish. *Evolution: The Fossils Still Say No!* San Diego, Calif.: Institute for Creation Research, 1995.
- Henry M. Morris and Gary E. Parker. *What Is Creation Science?* San Diego, Calif.: Institute for Creation Research, 1987.

After the wedding comes a marriage

by Nancy Van Pelt

When he walked through the door of the church, I thought he was the most handsome and appealing man I'd ever seen! Harry was stationed at an Army base near my home town. On our first date we went to an air show where we threw dimes into vases that would become ours if the dimes landed inside. We won a pair this way, which we jokingly said we would use for our home when we married and became missionaries overseas.

We continued dating and fell more and more in love. Eventually Harry popped the question and wedding fever set in. The wedding took place at my parents' home, which overlooked the water. The organist struck the first notes of the "Bridal Chorus" from *Lohengrin* and I walked down the aisle. Although the little flower girl began to cry and refused to scatter her rose petals, we had a storybook wedding. The ceremony went off without a hitch. The day was blissful. Everyone agreed that it was a picturesque and romantic wedding.

But—after the wedding comes a marriage.

Reality sets in

Most couples find that within a few days after the honeymoon, reality hits swift and deep. Yes, they feel elated over the excitement of settling into their first home, but they must also be prepared for the disillusionment that surely follows—a letdown from the bliss and glamour of the all-absorbing interest they had in each other. Thus the expression, "The honeymoon is over."

The groom suffers more from severe symptoms of disillusionment than does

the bride. Grooms tend to resent their loss of freedom, their new household obligations, and the financial worries. But brides feel let down as their new husbands begin to take them for granted. The masks that each wore prior to marriage soon drop away. The real self with moods and temper appears.

The first year is usually the rockiest in most marriages, with half of all newlyweds reporting significant marital problems. Newlyweds report dramatic increases in the number of arguments they have after the wedding; their tendency to be critical of their heretofore perfect partner, and their feelings of self-confidence.

During the first 12 months, a couple must face the most problems with the least experience. To be truthful, the future of the marriage depends on the adjustment that takes place during this time. The most teachable time for a couple are the first six weeks following the wedding. Gradually they learn that they must share their partner, that they cannot have 100 percent of his or her interest, affection, time, or attention. Employer, parents, friends, and relatives—all make demands.

Also during this disillusionment phase, the young bride may be shocked to find that her usually well-groomed husband wakes up with bad breath and a scratchy beard. He may find her blanket-robbing and teeth-grinding to be turnoffs. Other newlyweds find out the hard way how much time, effort, and money it takes to maintain a place to live. Whereas most couples are realistic enough to understand that maintaining a house takes time, they don't recognize

how much time and effort it takes to shop, cook, and maintain a household with endless tasks.

What saves us from despair is that we tend to dream of happiness rather than drudgery. If we imagined only the routineness of marriage, none of us would ever marry! The fact that six out of 10 new marriages in the U.S. fail proves that disillusionment sets in early, hard, and fast.

Once you get a little experience under your belt, however, you realize that your marriage will survive even if you have some disagreements. You also learn that some arguments are inevitable. You can still be friends and lovers although you don't always agree on every issue. You will learn, too, that even if you can't solve every problem you encounter, this does not signal the end of your marriage. At this point, you can become less anxious about annoyances that pop up and realize this happens even in the best of relationships.

Each year you spend together as a couple increases your chance for remaining married. By the time you reach your fifth anniversary, the possibility of divorce begins to decrease year by year.

What makes couples happy?

It is difficult to isolate the factors that make couples happy. But how you react



"It says here one reason for divorce is that couples no longer listen to each other."

to your mate in three basic areas and how your mate reacts to you largely determine your happiness level. These areas are: (1) Your expectations for the future; (2) communication patterns; and (3) how you make decisions and settle disagreements.

Expectations. It is important that you clarify expectations early in the marriage. How well you get along thereafter is determined by how well you understand expectations and agree upon them in advance. When you and your mate agree, you can build confidently for the future, one doing one job and the other doing another. In the end, you will enjoy mutually satisfying results because of your joint efforts. If you want a rambling one-story home and your mate wants a two-story colonial style, you will soon be at cross-purposes.

Your expectations usually center on five basic areas: (a) how you want to be treated; (b) your concept of how your mate wants to be treated; (c) what you believe are your responsibilities and rights; (d) what you perceive are the responsibilities and rights of your partner; and (e) what you expect from marriage in the long run.

Some young couples deny they have such expectations or think they can change them to suit any situation that arises. But expectations cannot be changed that easily. They accumulate over a lifetime and become an intimate part of you. To change them would be enormously difficult. Your expectations are as much a part of you as breathing. Just as you are not aware of inhaling and exhaling, you do not realize how deeply your expectations are embedded in you.

The more changes that need to be made, the more difficult it will be. The marriage that requires the fewest changes in economic, social, personality, and religious needs is the most likely to succeed. The marriage requiring the most changes between persons of vastly different cultural backgrounds is the most

likely to fail.

It only makes sense, then, to clarify all expectations prior to marriage, discussing them openly and honestly. If they conflict, you will need to discover a process by which you can alter, accept, or discard them. The position some take at this point—my way is the only one way to do things—must be dropped. You must realize that there are several ways to accomplish any task.

Obviously, the more clarification of expectations that takes place prior to marriage, the less clarification needed after marriage. Try as you may, you will not be able to foresee them all. Many adjustments will still follow. But this is what marriage is all about: taking two different family systems of thinking, feeling, and behaving, and striving to blend them into one harmonious relationship.

Communication. If you and your partner want to learn how to get along well with each other, you must develop a system of communication so that each of you understands how the other feels about each issue. Ideally, husband and wife should be able to discuss every subject of interest or concern to them. But couples quickly learn that certain subjects create fear, anxiety, doubt, or anger. However, the fewer subjects you put outside the bounds of discussion, the fuller and more satisfying your communication will be.

When emotions are brought out for discussion, they can be analyzed and dealt with for what they are—feelings. Feelings are not bad. They are transient in nature, and we wouldn't be human without them. The real question is, Are these feelings appropriate to express now?

Here are some guidelines for expressing feelings properly:

1. Speak without anger or hostility. Lower your voice rather than raising it.
2. Be clear and specific. Think as you speak, and state clearly what you

mean.

3. Be positive and be appreciative. No faultfinding, blaming, judging, name-calling, or other negatives.
4. Be courteous and respectful of your mate's opinion even when you don't agree.
5. Be sensitive to the needs and feelings of your mate.

Now some guidelines for being a better listener:

1. Act interested in your partner. Maintain good eye contact and respond with a smile or a nod of your head.
2. Use appropriate phrases to show agreement, interest, and understanding.
3. Ask well-phrased questions that show interest and encouragement to speak.
4. Just when you think you are through listening, listen 30 seconds longer.

I recommend that all newlyweds refrain from getting a TV set during their first year of marriage. Watching TV robs you of hours you could spend communicating. When this happens, something is lost from the relationship. It is essential that you knit yourselves together during the all-important first year to form an inseparable bond of intimacy through good communication.

Reaching decisions and settling disagreements. Prior to marriage, you probably didn't picture you and your mate bickering, arguing or engaging in put-downs. You may have seen your parents do this, but you probably told yourself that when you got married, you would never do that. And the younger you are, the more likely you expect to manage every problem cheerfully and graciously.

However, as you settle into the routine of married life, you will constantly have to make decisions concerning daily routines, roles, and major goals. Every time you make a decision, you are building a pattern for the future. In other words, when you encounter this deci-

sion again, you will not proceed through the usual negotiations. You will likely rely on the previous decision made.

But how will decisions be reached? Will one make the decision and try to win the other over? Will one always have to give in? Newlyweds are sometimes shocked to learn that it is absolutely basic to their relationship to air their feelings aloud as they come to a decision. Unless each verbalizes, they will never understand the underlying feelings about *why* they disagree.

It is not the disagreement but the pattern you establish during the early weeks and months for handling them that is important! Here are some points to remember:

1. Be willing to discuss any problem.
2. Try to resolve differences without making one "right" and the other "wrong."
3. Avoid angry outbursts. "Blowing your top" rarely produces positive results. Anger almost always arises when our self-worth is threatened. Instead of anger, how much better to recognize why you are angry and seek to discover why you feel you must defend yourself so strongly. Whereas romantic gestures and loving words put deposits into your love bank, angry outbursts make huge withdrawals. Guard that your account does not get overdrawn.

The in-law crisis

In-law problems rank at the top of difficult areas for newlyweds. More than any other problem, disagreements over in-laws affect the early years of marriage.

Parents have a hard time letting go of a child they have cared for so long. During the early weeks and months of marriage, both sets of parents look over the new addition to the family and judge by their own standards. Studies show that the husband's mother will pose the big-

gest problem because she identifies more closely with the wife's role. She may be critical of how another woman performs a role she has handled successfully for years.

Some helpful hints:

1. *Establish your own home after marriage.* Do not live with parents even temporarily. It is impossible to develop intimacy in someone else's home, even when parents promise to leave you alone. Living with parents makes you feel as if you aren't grown up yet, and you will feel restricted in many areas. Your sex life will be affected.

2. *Work at establishing a good relationship with your in-laws.* A new husband might send a bouquet of flowers to his mother-in-law on her birthday. A daughter-in-law would send her new mother-in-law a gift on Mother's Day. Invite them to dinner or take them out. The rewards can be great. If you treat your in-laws like friends, you will find them treating you the same way.

3. *Accept your in-laws as they are.* You might like to make a few changes in them, but they might like to make a few in you too. Give them time to adjust to you and to the loss of their child.

Never, never, never . . .

- discuss the faults of your mate with your parents;
- quote your family or hold them up as models to your mate;
- give advice to your in-laws unless they ask for it;
- make a trip to your in-laws your vacation;
- threaten to (or actually do) "go home to Mama."

When you visit your in-laws, make your visits short. If they give advice, accept it graciously. If it is right for you, use it. If not, ignore it. Enter marriage with a positive attitude toward your in-laws. Determine to enjoy your new family.

Continued on page 17.

Can we make sense of suffering?

by Richard Rice

The cross and the Resurrection provide a way to transcend our heartaches and pain.

Can we make sense of the disappointments and heartaches that life brings to us? Can we respond courageously and creatively to our losses? Sometimes the answer is clear, and sometimes it isn't.¹

Years ago, the president of a company I was working for promised me a position that was better than anything I had hoped for. But when his official letter arrived several weeks later, it said that things had changed and I would be going somewhere else instead. I was bitterly disappointed. I wondered why God had let me down. Within a few months, however, I realized that my new situation was better than the one I had expected. What looked like a setback turned out to be a blessing, and I was grateful for God's leading in my life. Experiences like this support the conviction that there is a purpose behind the apparent tragedies that come to us. God sends them, or allows them, or at least uses them to benefit us. As Paul says, "all things work together for good" (Romans 8:28, KJV).

On the other hand, there are instances of suffering that resist this reassuring pattern. Within the past three years, for example, a college friend of mine lost his son in an airplane crash, the daughter of another friend was brutally murdered, a teaching colleague died of cancer, leaving her husband with two small children, and a teenager I know became a quadriplegic when a car crash broke his neck. We can see God's hand in life's minor disappointments, but what do we do with incalculable suffering, or "horrendous evils," as one writer calls them? In cases like this, the loss is catastrophic;

it outweighs any possible good that could come from it. So, where is God when it really hurts? Why doesn't He protect us from harm and deliver us from evil?

The question is as old as time and as up-to-date as this morning's headlines. Nothing is more pervasive than suffering. Sooner or later, it comes to everyone, and it always brings disturbing questions. In his best-selling book on the subject, Rabbi Harold Kushner asserts, "There is only one question which really matters: why do bad things happen to good people? All other theological conversation is intellectually diverting."²

It is a curious fact that suffering seems to take us by surprise. Nothing is more obvious than the fact that everybody suffers. Yet nothing seems more incomprehensible than our own suffering. The writer William Saroyan supposedly said, "I knew that everybody died. But in my case I thought there would be an exception." But the fact is, there are no exceptions. Not for nice people. Not even for Christian people. Sooner or later we all have to suffer.

And people respond to suffering in strikingly different ways. For some, suffering is a tremendous challenge to faith. For philosophers, suffering is the greatest difficulty religion has to face. One says it's the only atheistic argument that deserves to be taken seriously. Another says that undeserved suffering is a greater obstacle to faith than all the theoretical objections ever devised, all put together. Undeserved suffering is the "rock on which atheism rests." At the same time, suffering sometimes has

a positive effect on religious belief. Many people find themselves drawing closer to God when they suffer. A woman who spent years in hospice work says that nobody dies an atheist. Everyone she knew came to terms with God in the end.

God's majesty and life's reality

Suffering is a particular problem for Christians because of our belief in God. What do we do with the apparent discrepancy between the majesty of God and the realities of life? If God is supremely powerful and supremely good, why does anyone suffer? A perfect Being could create any kind of world He wanted to. If such a being existed, wouldn't He eliminate suffering, or prevent it, or at least limit it?

Historically, people have responded to this problem in two principal ways. One is to move suffering *outside* God's will, to maintain that God is not responsible for suffering. The most popular version of this approach appeals to free will. God endowed His creatures with the capacity to obey or disobey. They disobeyed, and the world now suffers the consequences. So, it was creaturely rebellion that ultimately accounts for the sorrows of the world. God did not cause it or will it. It was never God's plan that we suffer.

The contrasting response is to place suffering *inside* God's will. Things may *appear* to be out of control, goes this line of thought, but God is nevertheless completely in charge, and everything that happens has its place in His plan. We may not understand why God does what He does, but we can be sure that it is all for the best. Everything we go through, even the darkest chapters of our lives, is just what we need. In time, we will see that God's way is perfect.

Each response raises questions, and each answer raises still more questions in an endless cycle of philosophical point-counterpoint. Such discussions serve a purpose, but their value in help-

ing us as we face our own suffering is limited. Every philosophical theory founders on the shoals of concrete human suffering. As Dostoevsky saw, all the theories in the world crumble before the misery of a single sufferer. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, the skeptical Ivan threw down this challenge to his brother Aloysha, a tender soul who had become a novice monk. "Imagine that you are building the edifice of human destiny with the object of making people happy in the finale, of giving them peace and rest at last, but for that you must inevitably and unavoidably torture just one tiny creature, . . . raise [the universe] on the foundation of her unrequited tears—would you agree to be the architect on such conditions? Tell me the truth." After a long pause, Aloysha finally said, "No, I would not agree."³ And neither would we. No explanation makes suffering intelligible.

In fact, there are even times when religion makes it worse. The believers have all sorts of why-me and why-God questions. They wonder what's gone wrong. Unbelievers have fewer expectations, so they are less inclined to feel that life has let them down.

When we're not getting good answers to our questions, the problem isn't always the answers. It may be the questions we are asking. Suffering is not just a theological or philosophical conundrum. It is the greatest challenge a person has to face. And unless we find a way to respond on a personal level, our theories about suffering won't be worth much.

The Christian story

The cross and the resurrection of Jesus are central to the Christian story, and they are basic to a Christian response to suffering. According to the Gospels, Jesus approached the cross with fear and apprehension. On the night before the crucifixion, He fervently prayed that God would spare Him the bitter cup that lay ahead. He had to en-

dure the cross anyway, and His cry of desolation, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" reveals the anguish that crushed out His life. With His resurrection, of course, Jesus broke the power of death, reversed the condemnation of the cross, and reunited with the Father.

The cross points to the inevitability of suffering in this world. Jesus did not avoid suffering. Neither can we. Jesus' anguish also confirms our basic intuition that suffering is wrong. There is a tragic abnormality to our existence. We know that we are susceptible to suffering and death; we also sense that we were not meant for them.

The cross further indicates Jesus' solidarity with us in our sufferings. It reminds us that we are never alone, no matter how dark and oppressive our situation may be. Because Jesus endured the cross, nothing can happen to us that He has not been through Himself—physical pain and hardship, separation from family and friends, the loss of worldly goods and reputation, the animosity of those we try to help, even spiritual isolation—He knew it all.

If the cross reminds us that suffering is unavoidable, the resurrection assures us that suffering never has the last word. Jesus could not avoid the cross, because of His commitment to rescue humanity, but He was not imprisoned by it. The empty tomb is our assurance that suffering is temporary. From the perspective of Christian hope, the time will come when suffering will be a thing of the past.

Cross and Resurrection are inseparable. Without the resurrection, the cross would be the last sad chapter in a noble life. Jesus' death would merely illustrate the grim fact that the good often die young, with their dreams unfulfilled and their hopes dashed. In light of the Resurrection, however, the cross is a great victory, the central act in God's response to the problem of suffering. So, the Resurrection transforms the cross. It turns tragedy into triumph.

Conversely, the Resurrection needs the cross. Seen alone, the Resurrection seems to offer an easy escape from the rigors of this world. It would lead us to look for a detour around the difficulties of life. If God has the power to raise the dead, He could surely insulate us from pain and sorrow and prevent us from suffering. But before the Resurrection comes the cross. And this forces us to recognize that God often leads us *through* perils, rather than around them. He does not promise to lift us dramatically and miraculously out of harm's way. Just as Jesus had His cross to bear, His followers have theirs as well (see Matthew 16:24). His promise to be with us in *our* sufferings also calls us to be with Him in *His* sufferings.

Facing suffering frankly

Making Jesus' own suffering the center of our response to suffering leads to several important conclusions. It reminds us that suffering is real and that it was not part of God's original plan. Suffering is the loss of good things. At times it results from our own choices. Our instinctive response to suffering is "Oh, no. This isn't right. This is not supposed to happen to me!" We should affirm this sentiment. We were not meant to suffer.

This insight rules out some of the familiar things people say to sufferers: "Compared to other people's problems, yours aren't so bad." "Your troubles are all for the best. Someday you will understand." "Everything happens for a reason. God wants to teach you an important lesson."

Sometimes things turn out for the best, it's true, but sometimes they don't. Sometimes they are bad, and they just stay that way. The Book of Psalms gives full expression to the depths of human woe. In fact, more than half the Psalms deal with "the wintry landscape of the heart," as one writer puts it.

Church historian Martin Marty describes losing his wife to cancer after

nearly 30 years of marriage. During the months of her final hospitalization, they took turns reading a Psalm at the time of each midnight medication. He read the even numbered Psalms, she read the odd-numbered Psalms.

"But after a particularly wretched day's bout that wracked her body and my soul," he writes, "I did not feel up to reading a particularly somber psalm, so I passed over it."

"What happened to Psalm 88," she said, "why did you skip it?"

"I didn't think you could take it tonight. I am not sure I could. No: I am sure I could not."

"Please read it for me," she said.

"All right: *...I cry out in the night before thee...For my soul is full of troubles...Thou hast put me in the depths of the Pit, in the regions dark and deep....*"

"Thank you," she said, "I need that kind the most."

"After that conversation...we continued to speak," Marty recalls, "slowly and quietly, in the bleakness of the midnight but in the warmth of each other's presence and in awareness of the Presence. We agreed that often the starkest scriptures were the most credible signals of the Presence and came in the worst time. When life gets down to basics, of course one wants the consoling words, the comforting sayings, the voices of hope preserved on printed pages. But they make sense only against the background ...of the dark words."⁴

People have the right to face their suffering openly. They need to know that God knows and appreciates their trials. In a book responding to the loss of his son, philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff describes the struggle to "own" his grief, as he put it. "The modern Western practice is to disown one's grief: to get over it, to put it behind one, to get on with life, to put it out of mind, to insure that it not become part of one's identity." To see his point we have only to think of the facile way newscasters talk of "healing" and "closure" just hours af-

ter some terrible tragedy has occurred. "My struggle," Wolterstorff said, "was to own [my grief], to make it part of my identity: if you want to know who I am, you must know that I am one whose son died."⁵

Transcending suffering

While it is important to acknowledge that suffering is real and that suffering is wrong, it is equally important to refuse to give suffering the last word. Suffering may be an inescapable part of our story, but it is not the whole story. We can be larger than our sufferings.

People transcend their sufferings in several ways. One is by courageously refusing to let suffering dominate them. This is the central point in Viktor Frankl's well-known book *Man's Search for Meaning*. When every freedom is taken away, one freedom always remains—the freedom to choose our response. When we cannot change our situation, we are challenged to change ourselves. And of course, the greater the challenge, the greater our courage must be. No matter how desperate our situation, we can surmount it by refusing to let it define our significance. We can be greater than our sufferings.

This call to courage rests on the conviction that suffering does not diminish our value as human beings. This is especially important for us to remember if we depend on success for a sense of personal significance. When my father-in-law underwent bypass surgery, one of his post-operative complaints was the fear that he could no longer be useful. If he couldn't be productive, he felt, life wasn't worth living.

We also transcend our sufferings when we realize that we do not suffer alone. God is with us in our sufferings. According to the Christian faith, the story of Jesus is God's own story, and its great climax is the crucifixion—a moment of agony and isolation. Some people believe that Christ

suffered so we won't have to. But the cross represents solidarity as well as substitution. Christ not only suffers *for* us, Christ suffers *with* us.

From the Christian perspective, this is a testimony that God is with us in our sufferings, that everything that happens to us makes a difference to Him. Paul's letter to the Romans contains the ringing assurance that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation—nothing can separate us from Him (Romans 8:35-39).

None of these things can separate us from God, not just because He will be with us when they are over, but because He is with us when they happen. As the Psalmist puts it, "I will fear no evil: for you are with me" (Psalm 23:4).

The response of hope

Suffering does not have the last word for those who have confidence for the future, so an effective response to suffering must always include hope. One manifestation of hope is the powerful desire to make suffering serve some worthy goal, to use tragedy for some good purpose. When Nicholas Green, an American boy, was murdered in a highway robbery attempt in Italy several years ago, his parents made his organs available to others. Their decision saved several lives and transformed the nation's attitude toward organ donation. We want our losses to count for something. We cannot let them make gaping holes in the fabric of life. We must somehow mend them, learn from them, grow beyond them. And Christian faith supports this hope with the assurance that in everything God works for good (Romans 8:28).

Christian hope also directs us to a future beyond death, to a time when suffering will be a thing of the past. As Paul describes it, death is an *enemy*—it is not

part of what was meant to be. But it is a *conquered* enemy—its power is broken and it will someday come to an end (1 Corinthians 15:26). Jesus' resurrection is God's promise that death does not have the last word. It assures us that God's love is strong enough to overcome death and eradicate suffering.

Putting all this together gives us a response to our opening question. If we ask, What is the meaning of suffering? there is no answer, because suffering itself has no meaning. But if we ask, Can we make sense of suffering? The answer is a resounding *yes!* With faith in God, we can find meaning *in, through, and in spite of* suffering.

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Notes and references:

1. An earlier version of this article appeared in the Spring 1999 issue of *Update*, a publication of the Center for Christian Bioethics, Loma Linda University.
2. Harold Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (New York: Schocken, 1981), p. 6.
3. Dostoevsky, Feodor M., *The Brothers Karamozov*, Book 5, chap. 4, "Rebellion."
4. Martin E. Marty, *A Cry of Absence: Reflections for the Winter of the Heart*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993), pp. xi-xii.
5. Nicholas Wolterstorff, "The Grace That Shaped My Life," in *Philosophers Who Believe: The Spiritual Journeys of Eleven Leading Thinkers*, ed. by Kelly James Clark (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1993), pp. 273-275.

What size...

Continued from page 6.

perspective, to place a limit on the person and power of God. We cannot measure or understand God from the standpoint of our inadequacy. Nor can we appreciate fully the role of God in this earth and its history from the limited perspective of our intelligence. We can think, probe, query, discuss—in fact, God encourages us to do so—but there comes a point when the vast gulf between the finite and the infinite confronts us. The finite cannot encompass or fully understand the infinite; the finite can only believe. It is then that faith comes to our rescue. And while we study and theorize, one who affirms faith in God will humbly confess that not all things are clear just now. "Now we see but a poor reflection; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

What size is your God? Large enough to make meaning in life, even though we cannot understand all the mysteries involved in life? Or so small that life becomes a tortuous journey, tossed to and fro, from hesitation to doubt to despair? The choice is yours.

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* All Bible quotations in this article are from the New International Version.

The 10/40 Window: New mission opportunities

by Pat Gustin

Behind this window live

millions of people who need to

know Jesus and experience the

joy He brings.

Windows have always intrigued me. Curtain-fringed windows. Bay windows overflowing with flowering plants. Windows with shutters closing tightly against a storm. Windows barred to keep out danger. Windows stained to convey beauty or a message.

Windows. Sometimes they are open, welcoming us. At other times they are closed shutting us out.

But consider another window—a special one, behind which live millions of people, scattered in thousands of “homes” in scores of countries. These people are like us, with homes and families, joys and sorrows. People like us who need the Lord. But when they look out their windows, they can’t see the Lord; they don’t know the joy of salvation. And we must ask ourselves: What can we do to help?

Towards the beginning of the last decade, mission strategists and planners from Christian churches around the world began to take a serious look at the task facing them. After nearly 2,000 years of “going into all the world,” what has the church accomplished? What is left to do? Where should the church focus its efforts in order to fulfill Christ’s command to “go into *all* the world” and preach the gospel to “*every*. . . nation, tribe, language and people” (Mark 16:15; Revelation 14:6 NIV)?

How are Christians doing?

As mission leaders looked carefully at the issues involved in reaching the globe for the Master, several facts of both joy and concern have become apparent. First, the good news:

1. Christian mission has been extremely successful in much of the world. As a result, the church today is no longer a European/North American church; but is the strongest single religious force in all of Central America, South America, many Pacific islands, and sub-Sahara Africa. The active membership in these countries far exceeds that of the “parent” countries.

2. The church in these former “mission fields” now has a strong indigenous work force, capable of carrying the major burden of evangelism, witness, and nurture.

3. The churches in these parts of the world have become serious missionary-sending bodies—hearing and answering the command of Jesus to “Go. . .” The goal of having missionaries “from everywhere to everywhere” has become a reality.

Now, the facts of concern:

1. More than two billion people—that is, 40 percent of the world’s inhabitants—have never heard of the gospel in a way that speaks to them.

2. Most of these are part of people groups that have no Christian presence among them at all. There is no one who speaks their language and/or understands their culture and/or lives near them so as to share the good news with them. They are what missiologists today call “unreached people groups” who will never hear the gospel unless someone crosses the cultural and language barriers that surround them.

3. Every country on earth has such groups living among them. However, the majority of these groups are clustered in one section of the globe. This

specific area of the earth has been pinpointed as a window of need, a window of opportunity, and at the same time, a partially closed window. It is referred to as “The 10/40 Window.”

What is the 10/40 Window?

The 10/40 Window is a section of earth running from northern Africa through the Middle East and central and eastern Asia, between the tenth and fortieth parallels north of the equator (see map on page 16). The area has several significant features that Christians must consider:

- This is where a majority of the world’s population lives. Even though that area represents only one-third of the earth’s land, it is there that almost two-thirds of the world’s population reside. The two most populous nations on earth are within this area: India and China, which collectively represent almost one half of the world’s population

- This is where the people who need the Lord are! More than 90 percent of the “least- evangelized” people on earth live in the 10/40 Window.

- This is where many of the world’s most spiritually receptive people live. The 10/40 Window is the birthplace of all the major world religions—Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. With the exception of Christianity, all other religions are strong in this area today.¹

- This is where the hurting people are! The majority of the world’s poorest people—some 80 percent—live here. Even more important, more than 80 percent of the people in the world with the lowest “quality of life”² live in this area.

- But unbelievably, in spite of these facts, Christianity spends *less than 10 percent* of its mission funds and mission efforts on this area.

Adventists and the 10/40 Window

The Adventist Church has always recognized the need to go into “all the world.” Since the mid-1980s, however,

there has been an increasing emphasis on finding the still-unreached areas and peoples of the world, and diligently targeting them for mission work.

Several organizations have been in the forefront of this move. The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), with its emphasis on relief and development projects, consistently goes into parts of the world where other mission efforts would not be welcomed. Loma Linda University and its specialized medical and surgical teams have been able to take their gifts of healing to some previously untouched areas. Adventist Frontier Mission has focused its efforts on the “frontiers” of the world by doing its work in previously unentered areas.

In addition, since 1990 the office of Global Mission at the General Conference has spearheaded efforts to reach not just the countries of the world, but also the unentered population groups within each country. Many of them are in the 10/40 Window. In 1998, as a part of this global mission, nearly 20,000 Global Pioneers moved into unentered areas in their own countries to do pioneer evangelistic work on a voluntary basis, focusing on an unreached group for one or two years.

What can we do?

As committed Christians of the 21st century, what can we do to meet the challenges and needs the 10/40 Window presents to us? Obviously, we don’t want to turn our back on the hurting, the poor, and those without the joy of salvation. Here are some things we can do.

1. *Take the issue seriously.* Reaching the unreached is a serious, urgent business. Jesus said so. In the parable of the good shepherd, with 99 of his sheep safely in the fold, the shepherd risked the dangers of the night to seek the one that was lost. He risked his all for just one percent. Can we do less, when more than 50 percent of Christ’s sheep do not even know Him?

2. *Pray for this area.* Join millions of Christians around the world in intercessory prayer for people in the 10/40 Window. They need to experience the joy of salvation that we know. Place them before God’s throne each day. The early Christian Church consisted of people



Who has not heard?

Countries with the largest non-Christian populations:

- China
- India
- Indonesia
- Japan
- Bangladesh
- Pakistan
- Nigeria
- Turkey
- Iran

Who needs to hear?

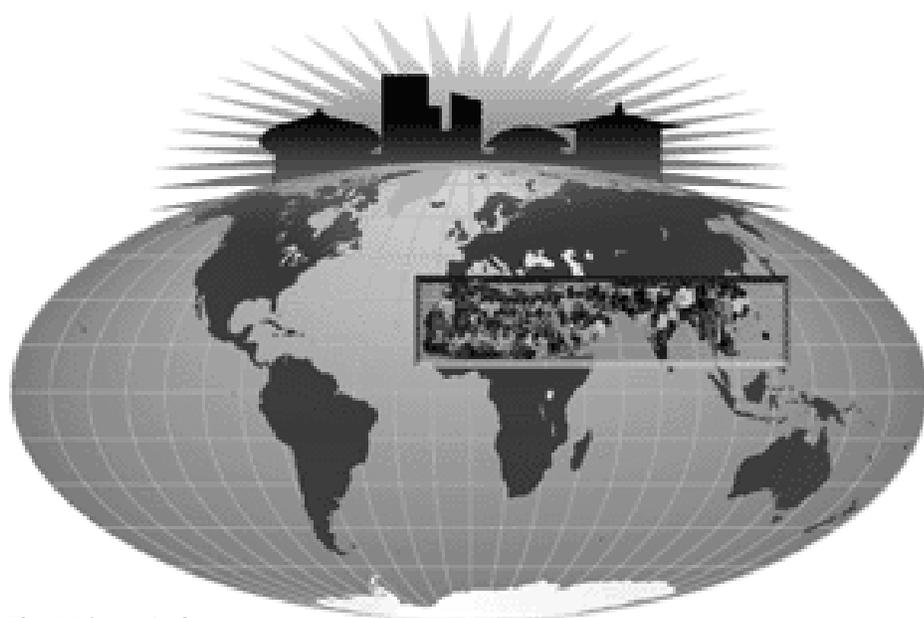
Largest people groups least evangelized:

- Bengali (Bangladesh)
- Han (China)
- Bhojpuri Bihari (India)
- Punjabi (Pakistan)
- Awadi (India)
- Turks (Turkey)
- Urdu (India)
- Orisi (India)
- Maitili (India)
- Burmese (Myanmar)

who prayed daily and fervently for power and wisdom. And throughout history, mission advance has always been coupled with dedicated prayer. Hudson Taylor, the famed missionary, once said, "If you would enter the province of Honan (in South China), you must go forward on your knees." Can we do less?

3. *Get involved.* Our involvement on a personal level is essential to reach these people with the good news. Our talents and resources must be placed on the altar of God. We need to increase our efforts to meet the physical, material, and spiritual needs of people living in this area. Humanitarian, educational, and relief work do make a real difference.

4. *Look for creative ways of sharing the "joy of salvation."* One of the best New Testament approaches is to go as "tent-makers." The Apostle Paul entered "unentered" communities as a businessman with a trade. He earned his living making tents but devoted much of his energy to bringing the good news to people



The 10/40 Window.

who had never heard it. Paul's modern-day counterparts are finding joy and success by pursuing their professions in countries all across the 10/40 Window. Computer specialists, engineers, health-care personnel, business persons, entrepreneurs, educators, and other professionals are following in the footsteps of Paul, working for the advancement of God's kingdom not as regular church-sponsored missionaries, but as modern-day tentmakers.

Christian students can pursue their education (especially advanced degrees) in universities located in the 10/40 Window. Here they can put themselves in close contact with future thought-leaders while they gain a credible education.³

But before going into the 10-40 ministry, they must be well-informed on one or more of the world's major religions and the culture that accompanies it. Those entering countries in that area of the world obviously need to become extremely sensitive to the customs, culture, religious beliefs, and convictions of the people in this area. Only as this happens can they present the good

news that Christians hold dear in a way that is meaningful to the hearers—answering *their* questions about life, meeting *their* heart needs in ways that are significant and culturally relevant to *them*.

No matter what method or approach we use, we must become one with the people as Jesus did—living among them, learning their language, sharing as much of their life and culture as we can. Only then will we have the right and the opportunities to begin sharing our convictions and beliefs.

Practice the art of genuine Christian friendship. Not friendship with a "hidden hook" to be dangled in front of non-Christians, and then withdrawn if they don't respond in some pre-determined way. Not friendship with a "hidden agenda." But genuine friendship that takes people and their lives seriously. We must get involved in the day-to-day lives of people and come in close contact with them as friends. Remember: We can give our unconditional love and friendship to non-Christians wherever we find them and the Holy Spirit can then use it. We don't have to create or even worry about "results."

Adventist Professionals' Network (APN)

Are you a Seventh-day Adventist with a graduate academic or professional degree? Do you wish to network and interact with Adventist colleagues in your field, discipline, or profession around the world?

We can help you do so. Just send us your name and address, and we will mail you the application form. Encourage your friends to apply too.

Contact us at: Adventist Professionals' Network, c/o Dialogue; 12501 Old Columbia Pike; Silver Spring, MD 20904; U.S.A. Fax: (301) 622-9627. E-mail; 105541.3200@compuserve.com

One final point. Almost every country on earth has people from the 10/40 Window countries who are working or studying there. We can reach out to some of these internationals living among us, and by so doing, we can give them a clearer picture of what Christians and the God of Christianity are really like.

The 10/40 Window is a window of opportunity—at times cracked open slightly, at times tightly closed. Committed Christians cannot close their eyes to what we see through the 10/40 Window. We see the needs. We feel the pain. It beckons us. And God calls us to reach out to those living behind the window.

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Notes and references:

1. Population of the area, by religion: Muslims—22 percent, 706 million; Hindus—23 percent, 717 million; Buddhists—5 percent, 153 million.
2. Quality of life is defined by life expectancy, infant mortality, and literacy.
3. For more information on “tentmaking” and studying in countries located within the 10/40 Window, contact Global Partnerships at the Institute of World Mission. E-mail: partners@andrews.edu
Web site: www.andrews.edu/IWM/partners

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After the wedding

Continued from page 9.

The last word

Harry and I experienced numerous problems in our early years. Even though we were not teen-agers, we were young, naive, and unlearned in the disciplines of married life. We tried to work out problems on our own, but weren't doing too well.

We went to church faithfully, had family worship with the children, and did all the good things Christians are supposed to do. But things got no better. Had it not been for our faith at this point, we could have thrown it all away, figuring that what we had together wasn't worth saving, that it might be better to go our separate ways and not torment each other any longer.

The Christian faith in which we had

been raised held us and would not let us go. Today we are stronger than ever in the Lord's love and in our love for each other, which helped us work through difficulties. And we learned that we would get out of our marriage what we put into it.

A successful marriage requires courage, determination, humbleness, and yes, a sense of humor! If you can learn to make merry over mistakes, high heaven promises a clean-up squad to sweep away the broken pieces and give your marriage a fresh beginning.

Nancy Van Pelt is a family life professional who has authored 22 books. Her most recent book is Highly Effective Marriage. Mrs. Van Pelt's address: 493 Timmy Avenue; Clovis, California 93612-0740; U.S.A. E-mail: vanpelt5@juno.com Her web site: heartnhome.com

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Nery Cruz

Dialogue with an Adventist artist in Puerto Rico

Nery Cruz is a gifted illustrator and artist whose work is known and admired in many countries of the Americas. Born in Jalapa, Guatemala, in 1954, he studied architectural design at Universidad de San Carlos and Universidad Rafael Landivar in Guatemala City.

For the past 13 years San Juan, Puerto Rico, has been Nery's home and professional base. Here, near the sea, he has his own studio and balances his work between commercial art and fine art. Before coming to Puerto Rico, he illustrated many books and periodicals, working as an artist for Pacific Press Publishing Association in both California and Idaho.

Nery began painting at a very young age, and his life's passion is art. He has had individual and collective exhibits in his native country as well as in the United States and Puerto Rico. In addition to art, he enjoys other activities that include missionary work, construction, mechanics, and gourmet cooking.

Nery has been married to Lori Le Duc, a nurse, for 16 years. The couple have three children—a daughter, Frances, 14; a son, Justin, 11; and a daughter, Lauren, 8.

The recent diagnoses of his son, Justin, with cystic fibrosis, and his father-in-law with a liver tumor have made Nery more aware of how vulnerable we are on this earth as human beings. All this makes him long more each day for the second coming of Jesus.

■ *When was the first time you knew you had a special ability to draw and to paint?*

I have been painting and drawing since I can remember, even in kindergarten. Crafts always attracted me. When I was small, I thought that every child could draw and paint well as part of normal life.

■ *Were your parents supportive of your artistic inclination?*

When I was 5 or 6 years old, I remember my parents showing my paintings to their friends saying, "Looks like he can paint!" But my parents wanted their children to study something conventional, to have a profession. Although they enjoyed my art, they viewed it as a hobby and were not convinced that one could make a living as

an artist.

■ *Did you have any formal training?*

While growing up I did not receive any formal training. I wanted to go to art school, but we had none in our small town. In addition, our modest financial situation prevented me from getting any formal training in art. I took classes at the university and kept up with art and technique through professional magazines and journals. Living, observing, and experimenting have been my real "teachers."

■ *Do you think artistic ability is something you are born with, or is it learned?*

One is born with artistic ability, but as with many talents, all depends on how you develop them. I see this in my

own family, where some have had the talent but did not take time to nurture and develop it. What we choose to do with our talent (art, in my case) is not inherited.

■ *Tell us about your Adventist background.*

I was born and grew up in an Adventist Christian home. One of my goals was to use my artistic abilities in an Adventist institution. So I was delighted when, some time after arriving in the United States, I was invited to join the art department at Pacific Press Publishing Association. There I had the opportunity to sharpen and expand my skills as a designer and illustrator. This experience and the friendship with creative colleagues gave me a good foundation for my later work as an independent artist.

■ *Why do you draw and paint?*

I enjoy most activities that involve a creative process—except writing. I like architectural design, crafts, mechanics, etc. Why I chose to paint and draw probably has something to do with what materials were available to me in the early stages of my life. I have always considered that my strength is in painting. Recently, however, I have concerned myself more with improving my drawing at the start of a particular work, and then letting the paint flow naturally.

As a husband and a father, I also draw and paint to maintain my family. God has given me the skills and I am thankful that by using them we can dress, feed, and educate our children.

■ *How or where do you get ideas for your paintings?*

I choose my initial subject from things I see in life, and on that basis conceive the composition. Then I look for references that will help me in fleshing out the concept. If I don't find the references, I will take my own photographs. I also take suggestions from friends and bounce off ideas from their ideas.

■ *To what extent does your cultural background influence your art?*

I am sure it does. For example, I prefer to use bright and vivid colors. The clothing of the native Indians in my home country, Guatemala, has a broad variety of bright colors. The varied flora and scenery of Puerto Rico, full of color and nuances, also appeal to my senses and is reflected in my art.

■ *What do you find most satisfying about your work as an artist?*

I enjoy being myself—working in my own studio, at my own hours, and on my own schedule. Another aspect I enjoy very much is starting to paint, not knowing exactly how it is going to turn out, and then in the end seeing a finished product of beauty.

■ *How do you react to failure—the moment you realize that a piece of art is not what you thought it was going to be?*

Failure is a relative word. When I see that a painting is not turning out how I think it should, I start doing something about it, such as changing the color. Color by itself, however, does not always “save” a painting. I will exhibit a painting even when my gut feeling tells me that it has not turned out exactly how I expected it to be. I then let the public judge the artwork. At times I have been surprised by their reaction! I never paint a piece that is technically wrong—at least not in my recent work.

■ *Looking to your entire trajectory as an artist, do you detect stages or style preferences?*

Yes, I do. This has resulted from the

context in which I have worked, my changing preferences, and my own maturation as an artist. I am a purist, but also a realist. I paint to live, but I also paint because I love it. I haven't yet achieved the type of painting that my heart wants me to paint. I really like the idea of painting in a surrealist style, with more color contrasts and better balance between the elements. So I continue to experiment!

■ *Does your family play a role in your artistic career?*

Every piece of artwork is based on a conjunction of concepts, and many of these involve the human figure. From the moment each of our three children was born, I have used them as models in my work. They have respected my artistic profession and have realized the importance they play in my work. My wife takes care of the sales and other financial aspects.

■ *How do you balance your duties as a husband and father with your life as an artist?*

As in any career, time is the key. I make time to work as a team with my family. Some might think that creativity works better when they are alone, but I feel more inspired when my kids are near. And when I sit down to paint, I always remember my obligations to my family. This encourages me to work harder and do my best.

■ *To what extent being a Christian and an Adventist influences your art?*

Approximately one-half of my work consists of commercial art. I decided many years ago not to do illustrations that involve alcohol or tobacco. Another aspect where I am able to witness about Christ is the Sabbath. New clients tend to call on the weekends and I get an opportunity to tell them that I do not work or do business on the Sabbath—that is a special time for God and my family. Advertising is a business that is always on the fast track and at a times

a bit wild. I don't even get invited to parties on Sabbath anymore, because my friends and clients know that I am not available.

■ *Are you involved in the life of your church?*

Yes, I am an active member of the Campo Rico Adventist Church in San Juan, Puerto Rico. I have been involved in our church's ministry to take food to heroine and crack users in the streets. I also play the guitar for junior Sabbath school, and I am a deacon.

■ *As an artist, do you have opportunities to share your faith with others?*

I had the privilege recently to exhibit with other Adventist artists in the Capitol building here in San Juan. Through the exhibit, legislators became aware of our way of thinking as Seventh-day Adventists. At our exhibit, no alcohol was served. We distributed Christ-centered publications. In private conversations with other artists and clients, God frequently opens the way to be a witness for Him.

■ *What counsel would you give to a young reader who hopes to make a career in art?*

My counsel would be simple. Follow your dreams without looking back. Do your work to the best of your ability. Seek God's guidance to utilize the talents He has given you in whatever field—be it art, music, science, or any other profession. Don't do anything that compromises your primary aim of glorifying God through your work.

Interview by Humberto M. Rasi.

Humberto M. Rasi (Ph.D., Stanford University) is the director of the Education Department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the editor-in-chief of Dialogue.

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Joan Coggin

Dialogue with an international health-care ambassador

Joan Coggin is a cardiologist, medical educator, and health-care ambassador. For nearly fifty years, Dr. Coggin has served patients, families, and nations around the world. Currently, she is also the vice-president for global outreach at Loma Linda University Adventist Health Sciences Center and professor of medicine at Loma Linda University.

Born in Washington, D.C., Coggin graduated from Columbia Union College and joined Loma Linda University School of Medicine in 1948. Armed with a medical degree in 1952, she continued with her postgraduate training in Los Angeles, London, and Toronto, and later launched a career that has earned her a place of distinction in American medical history.

At a time when women comprised barely five percent of medical school graduates nationwide, Dr. Coggin built a successful cardiology practice, and made a record for herself as a physician with a keen sensitivity to the personal needs and lives of patients.

In the early 1960s, Dr. Coggin extended the boundaries of her service across international borders in co-founding the world-famed Loma Linda University Overseas Heart Surgery Team. In its nearly 40 years, the heart team under her direction has either initiated or upgraded open-heart surgery programs in many countries including Pakistan, India, Thailand, Taiwan, Greece, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, Kenya, Zimbabwe, the People's Republic of China, Chile, Nepal, Malaysia, and North Korea. Dr. Coggin has also been a consultant to the television and motion pictures industries for medically oriented programs.

In the course of her international endeavors, Dr. Coggin has personally met with heads of state of Pakistan, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Vietnam, and Nepal. At home, she has also met Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon. She also has been awarded numerous distinctions for her outstanding service in the health sciences.

■ Dr. Coggin, you are perhaps best known for co-founding the Loma Linda University Overseas Heart Surgery Team. How was this idea conceived and implemented?

The heart team was conceived in the pioneering days of open-heart surgery. Dr. Ellsworth E. Wareham and I were working at the White Memorial Medical Center in Los Angeles. Since many hospitals were not doing heart surgery at that time, we operated one day a week at Los Angeles County General Hospital. Each week we would pack the heart-

lung machine and all the ancillary equipment we would need for a surgery in the trunk of Dr. Wareham's large car. It is then the idea occurred: "If we can pack all of this in a vehicle and transport it to another hospital, why couldn't we take a team overseas?"

At about the same time, U.S. Vice President Lyndon Johnson, while on a tour in Pakistan, met a camel driver and invited him to his Texas ranch. At about the same time, a Pakistani factory foreman's daughter needed heart surgery,

which was unavailable in Pakistan. After reading an article about heart surgery at Loma Linda University, the Pakistani foreman reasoned that if a camel driver could be flown to the United States courtesy of the United States Government, then surely his daughter, who was much more needy, could be afforded the same courtesy.

Four-year-old Afshan Zafar was successfully operated on at White Memorial. Almost immediately after Afshan's return home, the U.S. embassy in Pakistan was flooded with similar requests. It was then that Vice President Johnson called us and asked if we could export heart surgery overseas.

■ Then what happened?

Johnson's call seemed almost providential. We had talked about such an opportunity for many months. Within a couple of months we were on our way to Pakistan [in 1963], and the heart team was born. I believe in dreaming dreams and not being afraid of failure.

■ What has been the impact of the heart team?

One of the most important impacts is on the individual lives of patients. Another impact is on international medicine. When this idea was first conceived, no international medical team existed. Everyone that we talked to said that it was impossible for a surgical team to travel overseas to perform open-heart procedures. They gave us a variety of reasons. We examined each reason and found that we could work around the difficulty. When we travel overseas, one of our goals—in addition to helping

as many people as we can—is to teach the team concept. In many countries, the team concept, as it is practiced in the United States, does not exist.

■ *What are some of your most memorable experiences?*

I am awed by the hundreds of “extra” patients that our team has helped. If we had stayed home, they would not be alive today. After visiting Greece in 1967 and 1969, I paid a return visit to that country. Somehow, word of my visit reached one of our former patients. She came to the hospital with her beautiful three-year-old daughter and expressed her gratitude to the team for saving her life.

■ *Over the years you have received many awards. Which one do you treasure the most?*

The award I treasure the most is a red woolen blanket given to me by the father of a young girl whom we operated on in Greece. She was brought by her employer to Athens from Crete to be operated on. The surgery went well, but complications arose during recovery. After her parents received word, her father traveled to Athens. Through an interpreter, I explained the gravity of his daughter’s situation. He finally understood, and the tears came streaming down his cheeks. We were certain that his daughter was not going to make it. But he was sure that she was going to live. He said, “You pray for your patients.” Miraculously, she survived. Four years later, we traveled to the island of Crete and visited her parents in their small village. That common bond that we established four years earlier, despite the language barrier, still existed. Tears were running down both our cheeks as we hugged each other. As we were leaving, the father brought me a red woolen blanket that his wife had made on their family loom. That is my greatest award.

■ *As director of the heart team, you had the*

opportunity to meet many heads of state. Who impressed you the most?

Two of them. One was Lyndon Johnson. He had great personal warmth. When you met him, you felt that you were his friend. He had a very cordial, down-to-earth attitude that to me was amazing. The other head of state that stands out in my memory is King Constantine of Greece. I first met him in 1967 through his mother, Queen Fredrika. He was very pleasant, with a keen sense of humor. His government was overthrown in late 1967 and he and his wife, Queen Ann-Marie, moved to England in exile. Over the years, I sent his mother some vegetarian foods and he was very impressed with that. His wife, Queen Ann-Marie, enjoyed the vegetarian recipe books that we sent along.

■ *How did you become interested in medicine?*

I really didn’t know any other life than that of a physician. I had my second birthday in Loma Linda when my father entered the School of Medicine. I grew up always wanting to become a physician.

■ *Did you always want to be a cardiologist?*

No. I started out wanting to become a pediatrician. One of the reasons I changed my mind was that often times a child could be so sick one day, and the next day the child would be perfectly all right. What I like about cardiology is that you can figure out what the problem is. You have clues. You have the patient’s history. If the heart makes a certain type of sound, you know immediately what the problem is.

■ *How did you become interested in pediatric cardiology?*

When I first started practicing medicine, most pediatric cardiology was done by adult cardiologists. I found that I enjoyed the challenges associated with congenital heart disease—the types of heart diseases that you see mostly in pe-

diatric patients. I then took an advanced fellowship at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, and additional study at Hammersmith Hospital in London.

■ *Looking back at your career in medicine, what are your most gratifying moments?*

To see people who were incapacitated—whether young or old—and then seeing them well again. This is what makes medicine very rewarding.

■ *What is disappointing about medicine?*

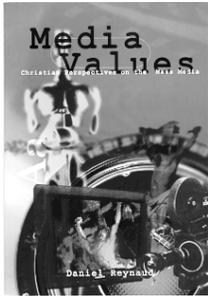
Being unable to help your patients. You feel so totally helpless and your patient dies. But this is far less today than when I started medicine. Recently I discarded a teaching slide titled “Cardiac Conditions for Which There Is No Treatment.” Listed on the slide were 12 conditions. Today all 12 of these conditions can be successfully treated. It just boggles the mind to think of the advances that medicine will make in the next 50 years, if time should last!

■ *What influence has your Christian faith had on your professional career?*

It has had a very direct and meaningful influence. Being a Christian should make one relate to people with compassion and understanding. This is a positive in any profession, but in the health sciences it has great significance. At times of illness and emergency, people are most vulnerable. Being able to dispense caring compassion and hope for the future are daily goals which I and all other Christian physicians strive to reach.

Interview by Richard Weismeyer.

Richard Weismeyer is director of the Office of University Relations for Loma Linda University. Dr. Coggin may be contacted at the Office of International Affairs; Loma Linda University; Loma Linda, California 92350; U.S.A. Fax: 909-558-4116. E-mail: jcoggin@univ.llu.edu



Media Values: Christian Perspectives on the Mass Media, by Daniel Reynaud (Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia: Avondale Academic Press, 1999; 144 pp.; paperback).

Reviewed by Volker Henning.

Seventh-day Adventists have long been interested in the transmission of values. Little work has been done to discuss the role the media plays in this process. Daniel Reynaud, a senior lecturer at Avondale College in Australia, has stepped into that void.

Dr. Reynaud takes up the task from a rich background. He lectures on media, has written for video productions, has designed multimedia campaigns for schools, and has been a consultant to church organizations on media policy.

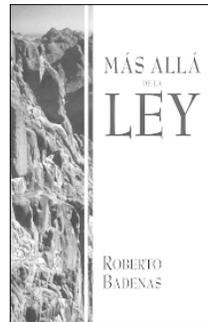
In writing *Media Values*, the author employs outline-style chapters that deal with the encoding and decoding of societal values by today's media—primarily television and movies. While Reynaud writes in a concise and almost telegraph style, the points he makes are well reasoned and solidly supported by contemporary communication theory. In just over 130 pages, the author manages to lay out a theory as to how the media affects society. He illustrates his position by several case studies from media productions in the U.S. and other English-speaking countries.

The book begins with no assumption of previous knowledge about media effects and goes on from there. Reynaud is able to quickly and yet precisely take the reader from the position of never having given the media much thought, to the place where he or she can intelligently wrestle with the issues raised as a Christian interacts with the media.

The reader acquires a deeper understanding of the media as well as some basic theologically based arguments to help integrate faith with the media. Reynaud's argument for a positive role for TV, movies, music, and other art forms within the Seventh-day Adventist community is laudable. He does not summarily dismiss the media as being somehow evil, as has so often been done, but rather places it within a biblical and general church historical context that argues for artistic expression as a way for humans to express God-given creativity so as to glorify their Creator.

Anyone interested in the role that the media play in the dissemination of culture and values will find this book to be informative and, at times, challenging. *Media Values* is unique in that it brings a strong, biblically based, Christian perspective to the subject.

Volker Henning (Ph.D., University of Tennessee) is the dean of the School of Journalism and Communication at Southern Adventist University. His mailing address: P.O. Box 370; Collegedale, Tennessee 37315, U.S.A. E-mail: henning@southern.edu



Más allá de la Ley, by Roberto Badenas (Madrid: Editorial Safeliz, 1998; 348 pp.; paperback).

Reviewed by Carlos A. Steger.

Más allá de la Ley (Beyond the Law) is a comprehensive review of the nature, content, role, and value of the law in the Bible. Writing for a non-theological but well informed readership and in a style that is both pleasant and captivating, Roberto Badenas deals with the central issues raised regarding the law by many Christians. The author approaches the subject from a theological and practical point of view, and is well qualified to write on the subject. His doctoral dissertation, *Christ the End of the Law: Romans 10:4 in Pauline Perspective*, showed the true meaning of the phrase as Paul intended. The author was dean of the seminary at Salève Adventist University and currently serves as director of the education department for the Euro-Africa Division.

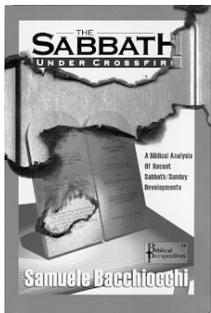
The book is well documented. Badenas mines both the rabbinic sources and outstanding commentators and theologians to analyze the meaning of the law in the Old Testament and its intimate relationship to grace. His approach to controversial passages such as Romans 10:4 provides excellent arguments both from ancient and current commentators to silence critics who would argue that Christ has abolished the law.

Although Badenas' work is commendable in many respects, I feel uneasy with his contrast between the letter and the spirit of the law, as if one necessarily excludes the other. The separation he makes between commandments and principles, implying that the first admit change while the latter are immutable (pp. 281, 342), seems to go beyond biblical evidence. His discussion of the value of the law for today's believer appears somewhat ambiguous: he maintains, on the one hand, that the Decalogue is still the revelation of God's will for human beings (p. 341), while suggesting, on the other, that the New Testament surpasses it (p. 287). If Jesus did not abolish the law, nor set forth a new law because the law of God is eternal (p. 344), Badenas' invitation to go "beyond the

Law” may probably confuse more than clarify.

In spite of that, pastors, teachers, and laypersons will find in the book insightful approaches to the law, as well as in-depth apologetic evidences to dialogue with other Christians on the enduring role of the law.

Carlos A. Steger (Ph.D., Andrews University) is Vice-President for Academic Administration at Universidad Adventista del Plata. His address: 25 de Mayo 99; 3103 Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos; Argentina. E-mail: viceacad@uapar.edu



The Sabbath Under Crossfire: A Biblical Analysis of Recent Sabbath/Sunday Developments, by Samuele Bacchiocchi (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Biblical Perspectives, 1998; 301 pp.; paperback).

Reviewed by Zacchaeus A. Mathema.

The author’s stand is unequivocal: “In the New Testament the Sabbath is not nullified but clarified and amplified by Christ’s teaching and saving ministry” (p. 173). Furthermore, Bacchiocchi examines Pauline passages often used to negate the Sabbath. He shows how superficial readers abuse Paul in two ways: first, by forcing the Sabbath issue into contexts that have nothing to do with the Sabbath; and second, by misunderstanding Paul’s attitude toward the law. The apostle “rejects the law as a method of salvation but upholds it as a moral standard of Christian conduct” (pp. 234, 257).

The book also expresses encouragement as numerous religious groups discover the Sabbath. Through it, the author is biblical, candid, historical, systematic, and thought-provoking.

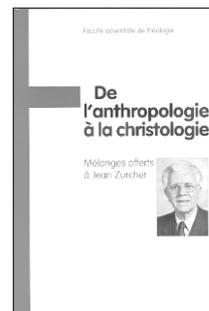
Unfortunately, Bacchiocchi does not emphasize the crucial question of authority. The Pope’s *Dies Domini* is consistent with the Roman Catholic position on authority. Those who claim adherence to the *sola scriptura* principle must also be consistent when it comes to the seventh-day Sabbath.

Zacchaeus A. Mathema (D.Min., Andrews University) is Dean of the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at Solusi University. His address: P.O. Solusi; Bulawayo; Zimbabwe.

Were you concerned with Pope John Paul’s formidable encyclical calling for worldwide Sunday observance? Have you heard of the Sabbath abandonment by a portion of the Worldwide Church of God on the basis of a “new covenant” theology? Have you met anti-Sabbatarians, arguing for Sunday observance, citing an alleged biblical basis for the replacement of the seventh-day Sabbath by Sunday? Have you met even Sabbatarians who wonder whether the Sabbath is indeed essential in Adventist experience?

Samuele Bacchiocchi, professor of religion at Andrews University, takes them all in a battle fit for theological kings. He admits that the Pope’s *Dies Domini* is a well-meaning call, but biblically erroneous. In a forceful rebuttal of the Pope’s argument, the author affirms that Sunday observance does not and cannot fulfill the moral and spiritual obligation of keeping the fourth commandment.

Bacchiocchi also unmasks the biblically faulty reasoning used by Sunday-keeping scholars. He turns their arguments of “new covenant” theology to build the binding case for the biblical Sabbath. New covenant in no way negates the Ten Commandments, but enables the believer to obey the law through the empowering of the Spirit. In the process, Bacchiocchi demolishes notions that the New Testament teaches against the Sabbath or that Jesus did away with the seventh-day Sabbath. On the contrary, Bacchiocchi shows that Jesus’ correction of distortions in the Pharisaical attitude toward the Sabbath confirms that He upheld the Sabbath and its rightful place in the life of a disciple.



De l’anthropologie à la christologie: Mélanges offerts à Jean Zurcher,

(Collonges-sous-Salève, France: Faculté adventiste de théologie, 1998; 157 pp.; paperback).

Reviewed by Enrique Becerra.

Jean Zurcher is a household name among Adventists in many French-speaking countries and beyond. He is known as systematic theologian, biblical anthropologist, prolific writer, admired teacher and preacher, excellent administrator, and above all, a Christian with vision and commitment. His influence as teacher, dean, and president at the Institute Adventiste du Salève has radiated far and wide through the institution’s many graduates. His commitment to Adventist missions took him and his wife to Madagascar, where they were so loved that when an Adventist university was established in that tropical island recently, it was named Zurcher.

When a person of this caliber celebrates 80 years of life as God’s gracious gift, it is appropriate that the school where he

Continued on page 25

Three laws of spirituality

by Jan Paulsen

A reflection on the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector

Two men came to the house of God to pray. Apparently they did not know each other. Spiritually and socially, they were worlds apart—or at least that is how they saw themselves. (Some communities make much of such distinctions!) These two represent two groups of people who have always found their way to the house of God to pray.

One was considered a basically good and respectable person. He belonged to the “middle class.” He lived a decent life and probably saw himself as a role model. He was clear about what was right and what was wrong. At least he thought so. The other person was considered a crook whose conduct did not take well to exposure—really, quite a despicable character. One was looked up to, the other certainly not. One was described as a “Pharisee,” the other a “tax collector.”

Lest you become troubled by the inference that people who enter the house of God to worship and pray can readily be divided into two such groups, let me

say immediately that that is not so. One would be hard put to find many with the steel, zeal, and discipline of a Pharisee. And probably not many who come to church have sunk to the depth of the proverbial tax collector. I suspect that in most of us there is a bit of both—a bit of tax collector and a bit of Pharisee; sometimes more Pharisee and sometimes more tax collector. But between the two we probably have a fair cross-section of people who come to pray.

The basic message of this story, told by Jesus and recorded in Luke 18:9-14, is a message of both *judgment* and *salvation*. The judgment is primarily directed against those who tend to compare themselves with others in the church, and in that exercise end up feeling quite good. They see themselves as accomplished and successful; in contrast to some, of whom they have negative opinions. As the two men expressed their thoughts and feelings before God in prayer, it becomes clear how they see themselves.

One commends both himself and God for what he is and for what he is able to do. He has no wish to be otherwise. He has no request to place before God. His fasting, prayer-life, tithe-and-offering contributions are impressive. (“Surely, God, you recognize that!”) His mind is focused on what he is able to bring to God, not on what he has received from God. Therein lies his first major flaw.

By contrast, we see the other person who looks pathetic and feels very out of place. His job itself (“tax collector”) was a liability. Decent people did not take up that profession. Socially, he did not

belong. Many saw him as a moral “leper.” So, it was most proper that he should stand “at a distance,” as the text says.

One could ask: Is it possible that we have in this story a basically upright man who had just become, unfairly, a victim of a burdened profession? No; not a chance! He was corrupt and a crook. His posture and his words all reflected his true state. Everything was wrong with him. There was nothing in him to commend himself.

But precisely therein lies his salvation. He had the courage to be honest with himself and God. Standing before God, he found nothing in himself to feel good about. He saw only failure and misery. With sentiments reminiscent of David many years earlier (“Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me,” Psalm 51:2, 3*), he cries out for help.

Laws of spirituality

From this memorable story come three important laws of spirituality.

The first one: The person who in sincerity confesses his or her sin before God is closer to God than the one who believes he has nothing to confess. God can deal with sins; He does so all the time. He is good at it. (“Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for” Isaiah 6:7.) But the blindness of arrogance is difficult to cure.

One may ask: By what criterion did the Pharisee feel so spiritually accomplished and successful? He compared himself with an individual for whom he had nothing but contempt! To compare



ourselves with others, which we often do, is usually of little help. The conclusions we then draw are unsafe. And that brings us to the second law of spirituality:

The second law: The one who admires his or her own spirituality usually finds it correspondingly difficult to see the good in others. We are reminded of Paul's words of caution: "If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" (1 Corinthians 10:12). Standing before God, there are probably no sentiments more hazardous to harbor than that while others may not be able, Lord, I am thankful that I am. This brings to mind the well-known thought: "The nearer we come to Jesus...the less we shall feel like exalting ourselves. Those whom heaven recognizes as holy ones are the last to parade their own goodness" (Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 160).

The sentiments of true pilgrims are that they find no satisfaction in proclaiming their own spirituality. Humility is their profile (see Philippians 2:3). A pilgrim knows from personal experience the frailty of humanity. A true pilgrim understands and takes time to give a hand to fellow travelers who find the journey difficult.

The third law of spirituality: While humans naturally and spontaneously hail the winners, Jesus Christ spontaneously and profoundly cares for the losers. The story in Luke 18 tells us about Christ's solidarity with those who struggle and find it all a bit much. He said: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick" (Luke 5:31). He also stated, through the prophet, "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly" (Isaiah 57:15).

The wonderful truth is that before God no one needs to despair. David prayed: "There is none like you, O Lord. ...You are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness" (Psalm 86:8, 15). The

good news for us all is that God can provide the Balm of Gilead to find healing for our wounds (Jeremiah 8:22).

Jan Paulsen (D.Th., Tübingen University) is president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

* All Scripture passages in this article are quoted from the New International Version.

Books

Continued from page 23.

served with distinction should undertake the publication of a book such as this, collecting essays written in his honor.

The pieces are crisp, scholarly, and readable. The book begins with a biographical sketch of Zurcher by his daughter Tania. Carlos Puyol then highlights Zurcher's particular interest in anthropology, his teaching and writing on the subject, and his contributions to church and institutional administration.

Eight essays on topics that were dear to Zurcher make up the rest of the book. These scholarly presentations include Georges Stéveny's provocative essay on the "Fragility of God," Richard Lehmann's discussion of "Religion of the Heart," and Kenneth Wood's "Jesus as God and Man." These provide an excellent foundation for an anthropology with a Christological focus.

Jean Flori writes on the tridimensionality of human beings consisting of spirit, soul, and body as outlined in 2 Thessalonians 5:23. He connects that view with the three orders of society—the clergy and their instructional task, the military that go to battle to protect society, and the laborers working to produce what society needs to be fed. Flori then applies this *functional* approach as a way to understand the Triune God, with a creative authority (Father), a revealing

function (Son), and a communicating activity (Holy Spirit). Not easy to follow Flori there.

Ganoune Diop approaches the *faithful and true witness*, while Roberto Badenas deals with the relationship of health and theology in Paul's writings. Roland Meyer presents, in closing, his reading of 1 Corinthians 15 on the final transformation of the faithful at the resurrection, when this perishable body (*sarkikos*) will be overcome by the imperishable one (*pneumatikos*).

Those who love serious study of the Bible and read French will benefit by this volume. It provides a meaningful enrichment to the increasingly cross-cultural dialogue in Adventist theological circles.

Enrique Becerra (Docteur ès Sciences Religieuses, University of Strasburg) is associate director of the Department of Education at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

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Against silence: A meditation on Kosova

by Ron Osborn

The word *djak* in Albanian means “blood.” It is from this root that the town of Djakova derives its name, though Julie does not recall why. Something to do with slaughtering of sheep, she says.

There are four of us in the car: Julie, a translator for the International Organization of Migration; her husband, a high school science teacher; their sixteen-year-old son; and myself.

They are traveling to Djakova to visit Julie’s childhood home; I am traveling to Djakova seeking answers to a riddle called “ethnic cleansing,” to the riddle of human suffering.

The route, for Kosovar Albanians, is littered with bitter memories, with dark tales that wound at each retelling. From the main highway to Pristina, we must first go north, past Raças. If you glance through the window, on the left-hand side, you will notice mounds of loosely packed dirt set against the side of a hill. The mounds are overlaid with wreaths and crowned with rectangular wooden placards.

In a forest not far from here, on January 15, 1999, Serbian security forces

massacred 45 unarmed ethnic Albanian civilians. Among them were two children, one woman, and dozens of elderly men. A little beyond Raças the road snakes back, heading southwest. Burned homes and farms dot the landscape. A United Nations survey of 1,500 Kosova villages taken two months after the war found that more than 78,000 homes were either seriously damaged or completely destroyed.

As a final act of spite, retreating soldiers often painted obscenities and epitaphs in large black letters on the walls of the gutted buildings. *Shiftari* is a favorite. It means “kike.” It means “kafir.” Or “spic.” Or “nigger.” It means “Albanian.”

When the war ended, Julie tells me as we drive, her husband returned to Kosova while she remained in Stankovic, a Macedonian refugee camp. He soon sent her an urgent message: She shouldn’t come home, he said. Not just yet. Militiamen had used their house as a barracks. He didn’t want her to see the words left behind on the walls. Or the dead cats in the bedroom. Or to smell the excrement on the carpets.

Yet these things are not so bad. Carpets can be washed. Words do not explode in your face.

When 18-year-old Ram Sulejman returned to his home in Klina after the war, there were no obscenities on the walls. All was intact. He was one of the fortunate ones. Then he opened the door and the mine went off.

His best friend, Kushtrim, told me about him as he swept up broken glass in Pristina. He was fighting back tears. “You should have seen my friend,” he

said. “He was so beautiful, so strong. Why did they do it? Why? I hate this war. You don’t understand—I hate this war.”

It is not just the war that aches. The assault on Kosova began at least a decade ago when the Yugoslav government in Belgrade issued repressive new policies in the region. These laws amounted to a systematic degradation of Albanian social, cultural, and political life.

That was when, Julie tells me pointing to the eroded mountainside we are driving across, they began to cut down the forests. The trees on the once densely covered hills were then trucked to mills in Serbia, leaving behind a desert-scape of shrub and stone.

Like so much of Kosova, the story here lies in what is absent, not in what is present, in what has vanished more than in what is seen. Take for example the hospitals where the drugs and medical equipment were looted. Take for example the mosques that were torched to the ground. Take for example the shops and businesses that disappeared in smoke. And the farm animals that vanished. And the legal documents that disappeared. And the personal possessions that could not be located. And the people who were no longer around.

War-crimes investigators estimate that approximately 10,000 Kosovar Albanians were killed during the conflict. In a nation of less than two million people, still closely knit together by family and communal ties, there are few people in the region who do not know someone by name among the slain.

Once over the mountains, the road to Djakova curves west, flattening into a





nearly straight line. We drive in silence until we cross the River Erenik. Julie smiles as she recalls childhood summers spent swimming and fishing here. Then, a little further, over a low hill, as we descend into the basin, Djakova.

The first sight that greets you as you enter the city is the police station. It is a massive, four-storied building that now gapes on all sides, the handiwork of NATO missiles. Slabs of concrete dangle high in the air from tangled steel rods. Abandoned and charred documents litter the surrounding yard.

Julie cringes as we drive past. She tells about the screams that used to come out of this building in the middle of the night. She tells about the blood-soaked garments, the unusual instruments, which were discovered here after the Serbian army fled. We make our way slowly down the main street of the city. The destruction along this road appears arbitrary, random; some buildings are untouched, others have been reduced to rubble. What was the process of selection? What was the method? How did the perpetrators decide where to vent their hate? And did it satisfy? Was their hatred quenched by more hate?

Luljeta Fajzaj, a 20-year-old nurse

from the village of Radvaç, told me about a fellow student, Afrim Gjuraj, whose body was discovered with 82 bullet holes.

What, I would like to ask someone probably still living somewhere in the Balkans, do 82 bullets accomplish? What was he thinking after the second bullet? What was he thinking after the 10th bullet? And the next? And the next? And the next?

Tragically, the shooting and burning continues. Albanians intent upon retribution have returned scorched earth for scorched earth, laying waste to Serbian homes and Orthodox churches, and terrorizing the minority Serb and Gypsy populations that remain in the region with grenade attacks by night, summary executions in the fields by day.

At the border between Kosova and Macedonia, a Gypsy boy fleeing the country, together with more than 250 members of his village, shows me the soft scar on his cheek, an unfortunate souvenir of his homeland left by Albanian snipers. Or, perhaps, a fortunate souvenir—a few inches to the right and the boy would not be standing before me at all.

Late one night, I watched a Serbian home burn in the town of Ferizaj. The



wallpaper blistered and bubbled before catching flame. Chunks of ceiling periodically crashed into the interior, punctuating the scene with bursts of hissing sparks.

Both the occupiers and the arsonists had long since fled, leaving behind a mob of children who danced gleefully in the eerie light of the blaze. “NATO, NATO,” they chanted, and “UCK, UCK”—the acronym of the grassroots Kosova Liberation Army. Albanian men and women gazed on from a safe distance, impassive, tolerant.

Then the wind changed. The fire, which to that point had burned safely skyward, moved horizontally, lapping the eaves of a neighboring house, the home of an ethnic Albanian. As the second building began to smolder, the townspeople rushed for buckets and hoses. The swarm of children, oblivious to the new development, meanwhile continued their chilling din, “NATO, NATO, UCK, UCK!”

As I observed this surreal spectacle, I must confess I felt a strong desire to see the fire consume both houses. Perhaps, I thought, that would convince the Albanians battling the blaze—some of them my fellow-workers and friends—of the pointlessness of the self-destructiveness of revenge, no matter the atrocities they endured. The fire, however, was contained, and the volunteer fire brigade set down their hoses to watch the Serb home finish burning.

I walked back to the apartment in which I was staying, past houses still inhabited by Serbians with nowhere to flee—one, the home of a bedridden old man who receives bread and milk once a week from ADRA community services; another of a grandmother who gives me a bouquet of flowers whenever I visit. There are about 40 such elderly Serbs remaining in Ferizaj, the most recent victims in a seemingly endless round of hate.

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Action Report

Dialogue leads to baptism and marriage

During the 5th Congress of the Association of Adventist University Students (AUABA, in Portuguese), held in November 1999 we had the pleasure of witnessing the wedding of two of our members, who had an unusual story to tell.

Marta Alençar, an Adventist student in the School of Fine Arts at Catholic University of Salvador, decided to place a poster on campus, announcing the 1996 Congress of AUABA. In order to secure the necessary permit, she contacted Ronaldo de Sa, who was a leader in the student association at the university and a fellow student in the School of Fine Arts. He expressed to her a negative view of what he considered the



Christians' narrow-mindedness and dogmatism. After the conversation, Marta thought that Ronaldo would be interested in receiving a copy of a recent issue of *Dialogue*, which included an interview with an Adventist artist accompanied by printed samples of the artist's creativity. So she proceeded to give Ronaldo the copy, inviting him to read the interview and to discuss it later with her.

During the next conversation, Ronaldo acknowledged that, perhaps, some

Christians were able to achieve excellence in their intellectual and artistic pursuits. The exchanges continued for several weeks, until Marta invited Ronaldo to attend a meeting that Adventist students held regularly to study the Bible and discuss contemporary issues. Attracted by the friendship and commitment of these students, Ronaldo began to study the Scriptures in depth, and on November 30, 1997 he joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church through baptism.

The friendship between Marta and Ronaldo also deepened and blossomed in mutual love. In the meantime, he was elected an officer in the Adventist Student Association. They exchanged marital vows during the AUABA 5th Congress, at the beach in Valença, Bahia, Brazil, accompanied by their many friends.

— Josemara Veloso
AUABA Advisor

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First European Congress of Adventist University Students

In Lloret de Mar, near the Mediterranean, took place the First European Congress of Adventist University Students and Professionals, October 29–November 1, 1999. The international meeting was convened and hosted by the Spanish Association of Adventist University Students and Professionals (AEGUAE), which celebrated on the occasion its 25th anniversary. The congress brought together 750 participants from several European countries—a number that grew to more than 1,000 on the Sabbath.

The theme selected, “The Bible in Mediterranean Culture,” attracted many scholars who, during the plenary sessions, addressed topics ranging from the Crusades, Christian Ethics, and the influence of the Bible on society, to Eschatology, the book of Ecclesiastes, and the

role of Adventist university students in the contemporary world. The Sabbath worship focused on “Jesus, Mediterranean Man.” In addition, ten seminars explored other dimensions of the theme of the congress. A copy of the program and the text of many of these presentations can be secured by contacting the convener, Dr. Ferran Sabate (elavoko@geocities.com) or the editor, Dr. Ramon Gelabert (ramoncar@teleline.es).

Toward the close of the congress, representatives from Adventist student associations in the Czech Republic, France, Italy, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain met and recommended to Dr. Roberto Badenas and Elder Corrado Cozzi (Euro-Africa Division directors of the Education and the Youth Ministries Departments, respectively) that the

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next European Congress be held in the year 2002. To obtain more information on plans for the congress and to register your student association, these leaders can be reached via e-mail: Badenas (104100.55@compuserve.com) or Cozzi (74617.3720@compuserve.com).

— Francesc X. Gelabert, Editor
SAFELIZ Publishing House

University students in Bahia, Brazil

The Association of Adventist University Students in Bahia, Brazil (known by its acronym AUABA, in Portuguese) was organized in February 1992 and is supported by the Department of Education of the Bahia Conference. Through the activities of the association, involving almost 1,000 students and young professionals, we encourage our members to bring coherence between their Christian beliefs and their intellectual development. We also provide training on how to share their faith among their friends and acquaintances.

In 1999 our members selected and promoted four projects: (1) Programs presented in our churches under the theme, "Never Give Up!" We sought to connect with other university students and strengthen their resolve to succeed. (2) Training for friendship evangelism among their fellow students, on the basis of a personal testimony. (3) Vocational orientation for pre-university students, through aptitude tests and interviews with Adventist professionals in their areas of interest. (4) A data bank with information about Adventist university students nearing the completion of their programs, making the data available to prospective employers.

Each year AUABA holds a congress, usually at a tourist spot in our state, in which lectures are presented and discussions follow. We also elect the leadership and together outline a program of activities for the following year.

We seek exchanges with other Adventist students and student associations. Visit our web site at www.auaba.cjb.net Leaders of AUABA can be contacted through e-mail: auaba@amilbr.com.br or through our mailing address: Education Department, Bahia Conference; Caixa Postal 198; 40001-970 Salvador, Bahia; Brazil.

—Josemara Veloso

Kosova...

Continued from page 29.

In Djakova, Julie and I at last arrive at the edge of the city's old quarter. The road is sealed off with oil drums and wooden planks, so we get out of the car and begin to walk while Julie's husband seeks an alternate passage. We are in the neighborhood where Julie grew up and we are in one of the most devastated locations in Kosova. The buildings here date back to the fourteenth century. They were constructed in classical Turkish patterns of architecture during the Ottoman Empire and were prized by Albanians as historical and cultural landmarks.

As we walk through the remains, Julie acts as my tour guide. This was an excellent bakery. There was a jeweler's shop. Here was a dressmaker who did very fine work.

If you stop to examine the contents of the rubble you can often decipher the occupation of the shops' owners. One pile is filled with charred clocks—a watch repairman. Another reveals glass bottles melted into sinuous shapes—a café. Poking through the wasted artifacts I discover a fragile tea cup somehow perfectly intact, a fragment of civility from out of the flames.

At the heart of the old market, flanked on all sides by the ruins, stands a fifteenth century medieval mosque. Its minaret was partially destroyed when the Serbian army used it for artillery practice. The soldiers, unable to force their way through the massive doors, then set the wooden entrance on fire, though the blaze somehow didn't reach the sanctuary.

As we pick our way across the burned floor panels, an object catches my eyes. It is an unobtrusive article, a blackened shard that might escape notice among the more salient pieces of debris. Still, as my glance falls upon it, it exercises an unsettling hold upon both my imagination and my conscience. It is a nail, ap-

proximately six inches long, covered in rust, slightly curved near the middle and tapered to a treacherous point. It is hand-wrought—one of the original artifacts of the building and at least 500 years old, Julie told me—the work of a medieval iron smith.

What she didn't realize was that, for me, in a peculiar sense, it is many years older. As I turned this nail over in my palm, I was struck by the jarring thought: wasn't it this, exactly this, that pinned the Christ to the wood? Wasn't it this, exactly this, that tore—and tears—the hand and heart of God?

Where do we find the suffering of the Lord of the Universe if not in the suffering of our fellow human beings? In Julie, in Luljeta, in Afrim, in Ram, in Kushtrim, and all those like them.

In the burning of their homes and shops; in the torture and rape and murder of the innocent; and even in the destruction of their houses of worship, their mosques and minarets?

As followers of Jesus living at the close of the most blood-soaked century in earth's history, we are confronted today with an urgent choice: we may either remain passive in the face of human rights atrocities, or we may speak and act to defend the Creator's image in those who cannot defend themselves. We may turn a deaf ear and a stone heart to the cry of suffering; or we may reach out, however we are able, to those who suffer—to those who, through their wounds, give us opportunity to relieve the suffering of the crucified Savior of the World.

Wasn't this what Jesus meant when He said, "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these..., you did it to me"?

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Birth control: An Adventist statement

Most Christian married couples wish to have children, while establishing limits to their number so as to be able to care for and educate them properly. Through the centuries, societies have employed a variety of methods to control conception and birth, some of them ethically questionable. Modern technologies have expanded the options regarding birth control. The Christian View of Human Life Committee of the General Conference developed a document titled "Birth Control: A Seventh-day Adventist Statement of Consensus" in order to assist couples who face choices in this important and intimate area. The document was endorsed by the leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in October 1999 and is presented here for the benefit of our readers.

Scientific technologies today permit greater control of human fertility and reproduction than was formerly possible. These technologies make possible sexual intercourse with the expectation of pregnancy and childbirth greatly reduced. Christian married couples have a potential for fertility control that has created many questions with wide-ranging religious, medical, social, and political implications. Opportunities and benefits exist as a result of the new capabilities, as do challenges and drawbacks. A number of moral issues must be considered. Christians who ultimately must make their own personal choices on these issues must be informed in order to make sound decisions based on biblical principles.

Among the issues to be considered is the question of the appropriateness of human intervention in the natural bio-

logical processes of human reproduction. If any intervention is appropriate, then additional questions regarding what, when, and how must be addressed. Other related concerns include:

- Likelihood of increased sexual immorality which the availability and use of birth control methods may promote;
- Gender dominance issues related to the sexual privileges and prerogatives of both women and men;
- Social issues, including the right of a society to encroach upon personal freedom in the interest of the society at large and the burden of economic and educational support for the disadvantaged; and
- Stewardship issues related to population growth and the use of natural resources.

A statement of moral considerations regarding birth control must be set in the broader context of biblical teachings about sexuality, marriage, parenthood, and the value of children—and an understanding of the interconnectedness between these issues. With an awareness of the diversity of opinion within the Church, the following biblically based principles are set forth to educate and to guide in decision making.

1. Responsible stewardship. God created human beings in His own image, male and female, with capacities to think and to make decisions (Isa 1:18; Josh 24:15; Deut 30:15-20). God gave human beings dominion over the earth

(Gen 1:26, 28). This dominion requires overseeing and caring for nature. Christian stewardship also requires taking responsibility for human procreation. Sexuality, as one of the aspects of human nature over which the individual has stewardship, is to be expressed in harmony with God's will (Exod 20:14; Gen 39:9; Lev 20:10-21; 1 Cor 6:12-20).

2. Procreative purpose. The perpetuation of the human family is one of God's purposes for human sexuality (Gen 1:28). Though it may be inferred that marriages are generally intended to yield offspring, Scripture never presents procreation as an obligation of every couple in order to please God. However, divine revelation places a high value on children and expresses the joy to be found in parenting (Matt 19:14; Ps 127:3). Bearing and rearing children help parents to understand God and to develop compassion, caring, humility, and unselfishness (Ps 103:13; Luke 11:13).

3. Unifying purpose. Sexuality serves a unifying purpose in marriage that is God-ordained and distinguishable from the procreative purpose (Gen 2:24). Sexuality in marriage is intended to include joy, pleasure, and delight (Eccl 9:9; Prov 5:18, 19; Song of Sol 4:16-5:1). God intends that couples may have ongoing sexual communion apart from procreation (1 Cor 7:3-5), a communion that forges strong bonds and protects a marriage partner from an inappropriate relationship with someone other than his or her spouse (Prov 5:15-20; Song of Sol 8:6, 7). In God's design, sexual intimacy is not only for the purpose of conception.

Scripture does not prohibit married couples from enjoying the delights of conjugal relations while taking measures to prevent pregnancy.

4. Freedom to choose. In creation—and again through the redemption of Christ—God has given human beings freedom of choice, and He asks them to use their freedom responsibly (Gal 5:1, 13). In the divine plan, husband and wife constitute a distinct family unit, having both the freedom and the responsibility to share in making determinations about their family (Gen 2:24). Married partners should be considerate of each other in making decisions about birth control, being willing to consider the needs of the other as well as one's own (Phil 2:4). For those who choose to bear children, the procreative choice is not without limits. Several factors must inform their choice, including the ability to provide for the needs of children (1 Tim 5:8); the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of the mother and other care givers (3 John 2; 1 Cor 6:19; Phil 2:4; Eph 5:25); the social and political circumstances into which children will be born (Matt 24:19); and the quality of life and the global resources available. We are stewards of God's creation and therefore must look beyond our own happiness and desires to consider the needs of others (Phil 2:4).

5. Appropriate methods of birth control. Moral decision making about the choice and use of the various birth control agents must stem from an understanding of their probable effects on physical and emotional health, the manner in which the various agents operate, and the financial expenditure involved. A variety of methods of birth control—including barrier methods, spermicides, and sterilization—prevent conception and are morally acceptable. Some other birth-control methods¹ may prevent the release of the egg (ovulation), may prevent the union of egg and sperm (fertilization), or may prevent attachment of the already fertilized egg

(implantation). Because of uncertainty about how they will function in any given instance, they may be morally suspect for people who believe that protectable human life begins at fertilization. However, since the majority of fertilized ova naturally fail to implant or are lost after implantation, even when birth control methods are not being used, hormonal methods of birth control and IUDs, which represent a similar process, may be viewed as morally acceptable. Abortion, the intentional termination of an established pregnancy, is not morally acceptable for purposes of birth control.

6. Misuse of birth control. Though the increased ability to manage fertility and protect against sexually transmitted disease may be useful to many married couples, birth control can be misused. For example, those who would engage in premarital and extramarital sexual relations may more readily indulge in such behaviors because of the availability of birth control methods. The use of such methods to protect sex outside of marriage may reduce the risks of sexually transmitted diseases and/or pregnancy. Sex outside of marriage, however, is both harmful and immoral, whether or not these risks have been diminished.

7. A redemptive approach. The availability of birth-control methods makes education about sexuality and morality even more imperative. Less effort should be put forth in condemnation and more in education and redemptive approaches that seek to allow each individual to be persuaded by the deep movings of the Holy Spirit.

Notes

1. Some current examples of these methods include intrauterine devices (IUDs), hormone pills (including the "morning-after pill"), injections, or implants. Questions about these methods should be referred to a medical professional.

Interchange

Continued from page 27.

learning about other cultures; correspondence in English. Address: 27, SBI Staff Colony; Arumbakkam, Chennai; 600106 INDIA. E-mail: frankoo7@usa.net

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My journey to faith

by Marco Antonio Huaco Palomino

In 1990, I enrolled in San Marcos University, the great intellectual center of Perú and the home of the forerunners of our national independence. I chose to study law, hoping also to pick up courses in history, politics, and philosophy.

That was the time when political unrest rocked the country and the universities. Beginning in 1980, the national government had to deal with violence and terrorism, which spilled over into university campuses as student organizations positioned themselves for and against leftist ideologies. In 1991 the government sent troops, tanks, and helicopters onto our university campus.

In spite of all this, my first year at the university was one of intellectual discovery, filled now and then with anxiety and spiritual confusion as I sought to reconcile being a Christian believer and being a thinker. My explorations into philosophy and science created a conflict between my deeply rooted Catholic beliefs and recently acquired rational inquiry into life and its meaning. Can faith and reason coexist? Is faith compatible with science? Such queries eventually led me to abandon my belief in God. The vacuum was filled by an increasing enchantment with materialistic-Marxist philosophy. As a result I dismissed the concept of the eternal God, but saw it as continual evolution of matter. I subscribed to qualitative leaps in the process of evolution, which finally produced human life and consciousness. It was not God who had created the human beings, but vice versa. Christianity was simply a belief system that spread along with other mystic

sects, and became popular as an historic accident. Conveniently enough for me, no Christian was prepared to refute my positions convincingly. The typical Christian “defended” God with a priori doctrinal, dogmatic and/or sentimental statements.

Moving to action

Meanwhile, I decided to move from words to action, joining a socialist organization at the university. About the same time, we found ourselves caught in the crossfire between the state and terrorism. Christian students were not exempt, since religion was considered the “opium of the people” and Christians were “enemies of the Revolution.” Seventh-day Adventists, especially, were considered “a foil of Yankee imperialism.” On one occasion, after a long day’s hard work, Adventist students had painted a mural of an open Bible on campus. Two days later they found it totally covered with black paint depicting a red hammer and sickle, with the words in the center, “Out of San Marcos, swine!”

In 1995, as a sworn Marxist-Leninist with a record of political activism, I was chosen as student representative from the law school, and represented the student body for the whole university. At this climactic point of political activism and ideological high pitch, I became acquainted with a fellow student, Ysabel, an Adventist. Burdened with overwhelming responsibility as a student leader, I often sought Ysabel’s help for notes and syllabi covering classes I was forced to miss. Her unprejudiced and helpful attitude toward one who relent-

lessly criticized religion led me to examine her “peculiar” beliefs. I tolerated many of the doctrinal positions, but stopped short when I heard about belief in the devil as a personal being. I also considered unacceptable Adventist no’s—no drinking, no dancing, no smoking, no, no, no! I could not accept their fanatical observance of the Jewish Sabbath as day of rest. “Adventists are a sect,” I told myself.

About then, the Adventist Student Center invited me to attend one of their seminars. My respect for differing ideologies led me to attend. I was very surprised at the carefully reasoned positions establishing the relationship between faith and science, between revelation in the Bible and scientific research. My curiosity was greatly aroused, as well as my consciousness of fundamental weaknesses in the logic and reasoning of socialist discourse in general and Marxism in particular, which by that time had become very clear to me. The seminar presenter had referred to rolls of manuscripts discovered in 1947 near the Dead Sea which greatly supported the historicity of the Bible. That was my first cue. I then remembered that there was a book at home regarding that very topic.

Truth is not a theory, but a person

Early in 1996, I began reading that book. It raised many serious challenges. It would be sectarian and dogmatic cowardice for a freethinker like me to deny it: Those rolls of Qumran confirmed the antiquity and faithfulness of the text of the Book of Isaiah. That might not have meant much, if it were not for the

prophecies it contained regarding one who considered Himself the Son of God—Jesus of Nazareth. Were these predictions fulfilled? I had to verify for myself, and there was only one way to do it.

That night I did something I would never have done otherwise. I reached out and took from a corner shelf in my personal library that forgotten book, the Bible. Using the index, I went to chapter 53 of Isaiah and read it several times. The harmony between the details described in that prophetic book, written several centuries before the Gospel, matched the facts in the latter. The very foundation of my materialistic philosophy of history began to crumble. If something called “prophecy” existed at all, it meant that my whole house of cards had to come tumbling down. What mental capacity could foresee the future if Being (visible reality) was determined by Conscience (God), and not Conscience by Being as postulated by Marx and other materialists?

What if this was true? Had I been denying the very Son of God during all this time? Wasn't I the public leader of the university's best-recognized socialist organization, and after many years the leader of the wave of the future in the student movement? Unbelievable! What would they say about me? From militant atheist to a little lamb in a religious “sect”? But truth was truth, regardless of my personal preferences and convenience. The truth of something did not depend on the number of people recognizing it as such. Also, I would be the one injured living a life based on self-deception.

It would be best to remain calm and reach a decision, I told myself. “You must re-open this question about the existence of God. Research it, go back to square one.” No end of questions boiled in my mind. How to account for so much injustice and exploitation, if God exists? How can there be a merciful God, if He is indifferent to pain? Why

centuries of a victorious Inquisition, if many of the martyrs were on God's side? I didn't understand it. I only knew that Isaiah 53 was there. I could see, as in a dream, a serene and smiling face, somewhat youthful but mature. That was a momentous night! Saul again fell and rolled in the dust. At last I knew that truth is not a theory but a person—the Person of Jesus.

“Do you know the Lord Jesus?”

I kept to myself the grave doubts that assaulted me. I asked questions here and there, opened the Bible, searching. I was astounded that many freethinkers around me wanted to skip over some fundamental facts out of fear of the truth or out of simple prejudice.

Once I was invited to a small group that was studying the topic of righteousness by faith in the Bible. I was impressed with the fact that being a Christian was not just being a consistently moral person. I realized that the “opium” of Marxist doctrine could not be identified with the Bible's teaching. God was very understanding and realistic in not expecting of us perfection as a result of our own effort—that is impossible!

About that time there was a week of prayer held by Pastor Alejandro Bullón. My responsibilities made it impossible for me to attend regularly, but I persevered and was present one evening. The topic was the conversion of Paul. This was too much! Had the Holy Spirit led me there to challenge me? I took a taxi home, and, surprisingly, the driver asked me, “Do you know the Lord Jesus?” I looked at him, and said, “Yes, I think I do, now.”

In spite of the difficult moments I faced in 1996 because of my political activities, my knowledge deepened, and I began to keep the Sabbath, attending church so regularly that I was considered a member. I investigated the doctrines for myself, grabbing every Adventist book I could lay hold of. One of these was *The Great Controversy*, which

completely changed my old socialist philosophy of history.

The doctrine of the gift of prophecy manifested in Ellen G. White was one that I found particularly difficult, especially because many of my Adventist friends did not know much about it. Some maintained that some statements were inspired, others not. Some said the *Testimonies* applied only to the time when they were written. But I couldn't be baptized unless I accepted this doctrine for the simple reason that it was part of the baptismal vows. I confessed Christ as my Saviour and kept the commandments, but would I be a real Seventh-day Adventist? Providence led someone to place in my hands a copy of the excellent book *E. G. White, Prophet of Destiny*. After reading it and reflecting on it, my most difficult questions were resolved.

My church attendance brought out the expected hostile reaction from my former comrades. But “if Christ be for us, who can be against us?” One of them, witnessing my conversion, also rediscovered his original faith, and although he is now sick in bed with a painful illness, he shares our hope in the promise of the resurrection. I was baptized August 30, 1997. At present I serve as Sabbath school teacher and director of religious liberty in my local church. I'm also a lay preacher and the president of the Adventist Student Center at the University of San Marcos. I rejoice in my friendship with Jesus. And together with my colleagues at the university, I fight the good battle of faith looking for the glorious return of our Lord.

Marco Antonio Huaco Palomino, having completed his degree in Law, is preparing his thesis on religious liberty rights. He currently serves as legal advisor for ADRA Perú. E-mail: mhuaco@hotmail.com

