

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

DIALOGUE

Published in

- ▶ English
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**Faith, reason, and the
educated Christian**

**Creationism:
Still valid in the new
millennium?**

He is risen indeed!

How shall we worship?

**The stranger
in the road**

Labeling or loving?



Volume 15
Number

3



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Essays

5 Faith, reason, and the educated Christian

To love God with all your mind and heart is a call to integrate faith and reason in one's devotion to God and pursuit of life, without giving up the priority of God.

— Humberto M. Rasi

10 Creationism: Still valid in the new millennium?

Creationism is a robust paradigm, fully capable of undergirding the scientific enterprise.

— George T. Javor

13 He is risen indeed!

The case for Christianity rests on the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

— David Marshall

17 How shall we worship?

It is the transformation of the heart that will guarantee a genuine format of Christian worship.

— Lilianne Doukhan

Editorial

- 3 The first 15 years
 — Humberto M. Rasi

4 Letters

Profiles

- 20 Marilyn Fargo
 — Ella Rydzewski
 22 Ruy Vieira
 — Roberto de Azevedo

Logos

- 24 Labeling or loving?
 — Denise Badger

First Person

- 26 The stranger in the road
 — Ivan T. Blazen

Action Report

- 28 General Youth Conference
 makes history
 — Staci Osterman

- 29 Shine, baby, shine
 — Will Koerig

- 30 University students meet
 in Argentina
 — Horacio Rizzo

Books

- 32 *God, Gödel and Grace* (Goldstein)
 — George W. Reid
 32 *Truth Left Behind* (Wohlberg)
 — Nancy Vyhmeister
 33 *Fulgores de esperanza* (Rodríguez)
 — Humberto Treiyer

Open Forum

- 35 Geological records and the Genesis
 time frame
 — Leonard Brand

Inserts

Interchange

**Dialogue Index, Vols.11-15
 (1999-2003)**

Editorial

The first 15 years

With this issue, *Dialogue* completes its 15th year of continuous publication. This means that since its founding in 1989, more than 1.5 million copies of this journal have circulated around the world, reaching tens of thousands of Adventist university students and young professionals in more than 100 countries.

Dialogue is the first journal produced at the world headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that is truly global in scope. Thanks to being published simultaneously in English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish editions, it is accessible to readers from Spain to Singapore and from Brazil to Rwanda. As a result, our editorial office has received correspondence from readers in 117 countries, reacting to the articles, requesting prayers, or seeking to connect with other readers. With the creation of the *Dialogue* website (<http://dialogue.adventist.org>), our best articles are now available to an even broader readership. For all this, we thank God!

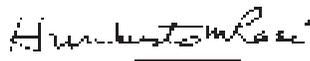
Dialogue constitutes an important facet of the activities sponsored by the Committee on Adventist Ministry to/with College and University Students (AMiCUS), which brings together the energies of the departments of Chaplaincy, Education, and Youth. It also makes tangible our church leaders' commitment to strengthening the faith and supporting the outreach initiatives of the growing number of Adventist students attending public colleges and universities.

From the beginning, *Dialogue* defined itself as "a journal of faith, thought, and action." For the members of our editorial team, trust in God, loyalty to His teachings as expressed in the Bible, and commitment to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord are the very core and foundation of our lives as Seventh-day Adventists. We believe that the Holy Spirit delights in fostering the development of our talents, including our mind. The Spirit also leads us to a deeper understanding of truth as we study the natural world that God created and sustains and the results of human creativity. But we are convinced that faith and thought must become visible in actions that help others and lead them to know Jesus.

For these reasons, *Dialogue* publishes in each issue essays that approach contemporary topics from the perspective of the biblical-Christian worldview, interviews with Adventists who have succeeded in their professions while remaining active in their congregations, devotionals that connect a passage of Scripture with everyday life, and first-person stories and reports that show how Christian faith makes a positive difference in the lives of people.

Since our journal is produced mostly by editors who volunteer their time, we are greatly encouraged by letters and electronic messages that tell us how copies of *Dialogue* are shared with fellow students and teachers, how an article has responded to a spiritual or intellectual need, or how some friendships established through "Interchange" evolve into courtship and eventually a Christian marriage.

As we look to the future trusting in God's guidance, we will continue to enlarge our international network, nurturing the faith of our readers, inspiring them toward positive leadership and action, and publishing articles that will expand and strengthen the Adventist mind.



Humberto M. Rasi
 Editor-in-chief and founder of *Dialogue*

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

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***Dialogue* has received correspondence from readers in 117 countries around the world.**

Letters

A pleasant surprise

Recently I came across a back issue of *Dialogue*. What a pleasant surprise!

This is the type of journal that Adventist students like me have been yearning for to give us encouragement and ideas on sharing Christ's gospel to an overwhelming majority of fellow students who have other religious convictions or no religion at all. As the public-relations officer of the local chapter of the Nigerian Association of Adventist Students (NAAS), I wish to request more current copies of *Dialogue* for distribution among the members of our local group.

David Ahamba

Abia State University
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The editors respond:

Thank you, David, for your encouraging comments. In order to receive copies of *Dialogue* for your chapter, you need to contact the director of the Youth Department of the Nigerian Union and ask to be placed in the official list. In the meantime, you can read some of the best articles of the journal in our new website: <http://dialogue.adventist.org>

Thanks for new friends

After enjoying several issues of *Dialogue*, I decided to write to four of the readers who had listed themselves in "Interchange." Three of them responded. Delighted by the response, I placed my name in the same section of the journal. Since then, I have established friendships with many students in various countries of the world. Thank you! I also appreciate the excellent articles that encourage us to live an active Christian life. Congratulations!

Gisella Aranda Z.

Universidad Peruana Unión
Naña, PERU

Scientific topics and a love story

I discovered *Dialogue* while visiting my parents in Italy and finding a copy of issue 14:1 at the bookstand of the Adventist church we attended. Congratulations for publishing a very interesting journal! As a clinical biochemist I appreciated the articles that addressed scientific topics, but was personally touched by the love story of Maybeth and Luis, who first met through "Interchange" and had such a happy ending.

Daniela Assimiti

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Help with Sabbath problems

As a former local officer of the Movement of Adventist Students (MAS) in Mindanao, I wish to express warm appreciation for the encouragement we received from the regional representative of AMiCUS. The most serious problem we face in public universities are the exams scheduled on the Sabbath. By God's grace and through the support of MAS alumni, we were able to help Adventist students find a solution to this common challenge to our Christian convictions.

Christopher Batbatan

Mindanao, PHILIPPINES
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An essential role

As former university students, now professionals in health fields, my wife and I wish to send our contribution to support the publication of *Dialogue*. We remember the challenges that we faced during those years and believe that this journal fulfills an essential role in nurturing the faith and expanding the mind of Adventists who study in public universities around the world.

Carlos and Elba Fayard

Loma Linda University
California, U.S.A.

The editors respond:

Your generous contribution is really appreciated! Readers interested in expanding *Dialogue's* international ministry may contact the editor-in-chief at rasih@gc.adventist.org. An address will be provided for your contribution, and AMiCUS will issue an official receipt.

Shining brightly

I wish to commend the Committee on Adventist Ministry to/with College and University Students (AMiCUS) for publishing *Dialogue* and for supporting individual and group initiatives that allow the light of the gospel to shine brightly wherever we may study or work.

Ademola Idowu

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Ideas to enrich my classes

A good friend sent me several back issues of *Dialogue*. What a treat! As a high school teacher, I have been able to enrich my classes with the ideas extracted from the articles found in the journal. A suggestion: Include more poetry in *Dialogue*, both in the original language and in a good translation. I realize that it is difficult to translate poetry, but the addition will make the journal even more interesting!

David Morais

Dom Pedro, MA, BRAZIL

Write to us!

We welcome your comments, reactions and questions, but limit your letters to 200 words. Write to *Dialogue Letters*: 12501 Old Columbia Pike; Silver Spring, MD 20904; U.S.A. You can also use fax: (301) 622-9627, or e-mail: 102555.2215@compuserve.com Letters selected for publication may be edited for clarity or space.

Faith, reason, and the educated Christian

by Humberto M. Rasi

To love God with all your mind and heart is a call to integrate faith and reason in one's devotion to God and pursuit of life, without giving up the priority of God.

"Lord, help me never to use my reason against the Truth."

—A JEWISH PRAYER.

What's the proper relationship between faith and reason in the life of a believer? Through the centuries, the topic has been of intense interest and concern to thoughtful Christians. Believers involved in advanced studies, research, or professions that challenge the basis of one's faith continually face the dilemma of how to integrate faith and reason in their daily life. This tension is heightened by the fact that many of our contemporaries assume that intelligent people are not religious or, if they are, prefer that they keep such beliefs private.

How has the issue been faced by Christian intellectuals in the past? This article will provide a brief historical survey of the options, review key biblical passages on the subject, and propose ways by which thoughtful Christians can satisfy their passion to both believe and cultivate a reasoned faith.

Premises and definitions

According to the Scriptures, God created Adam and Eve at the beginning of human history and endowed them with rationality, with "power to think and to do."¹ Exercising those abilities, our first parents disobeyed God and, as a result, lost their perfect status and home. Although we have inherited the weaknesses of their fallen condition, God has preserved our capacity to think for ourselves, exercise trust, and make choices. In fact, one of the goals of Adventist education is "to train the youth to be

thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought."²

Before proceeding, clarity requires that we define a few terms:

Faith, from a Christian perspective, is an act of the will that chooses to place its trust in God in response to His self-disclosure and to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in our conscience.³ Religious faith is stronger than belief; it includes the willingness to live and even die for one's convictions.

Reason is the exercise of the mental capacity for rational thought, understanding, discernment, and acceptance of a concept or idea. Reason looks for clarity, consistency, coherence, and proper evidence.

Belief is the mental act of accepting as true, factual, or real a statement or a person. Of course, it is also possible to hold a belief in something that is not true.

Will is the ability and power to elect a particular belief or course of action in preference to others. **Choice** is the free exercise of such ability.

Reason and faith are asymmetrically related. It is possible to believe that God exists (reason) without believing in God or trusting in Him (faith).⁴ But it is impossible to believe and trust in God (faith) without believing that He exists (reason).

I accept the primacy of faith in the Christian intellectual life, as expressed in two classical formulations: *Fides quaerens intellectum* ("Faith seeking understanding") and *Credo ut intelligam* ("I believe in order that I may understand"). Reason is important to faith, but it cannot replace faith. To a Chris-

tian, acquiring knowledge per se is not the ultimate object of life. Life's highest goal is to know God and to establish a personal, loving relationship with Him. Such trust and friendship lead to obedience to God and to loving service to fellow human beings.

Relationship between faith and reason

How have believers related to issues of faith and reason in the past? How should we? During the Christian era, individuals have assumed various approaches that can be outlined as follows:⁵

1. Fideism: *Faith ignores or minimizes the role of reason in arriving at ultimate truth.* According to this position, faith in God is the ultimate criterion of truth and all that a Christian needs for certitude and salvation. Fideists affirm that God reveals Himself to human consciousness through the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit, and personal experience, which are sufficient to know all important truths. A popular contemporary saying summarizes this stance: "God says it. I believe it. That settles it."

Radical, non-rational fideism was first articulated by Tertullian (160?-230?), an early Christian apologist known for his critical attitude toward the surrounding culture. It was the argumentative Tertullian who remarked, *Credo quia absurdum* ("I believe because it is absurd"). In the succeeding centuries other Christian authors have extolled the supreme value of blind faith in direct opposition to human reason. Carried to an extreme, fideism rejects rational thought, opposes advanced education and scientific research, and may lead to a private, mystical religion.

Critics of fideism, especially of its more radical expression, observe that faith in God and in Jesus Christ presupposes that there is a God who has revealed Himself to humanity in Christ. And that unless those presuppositions can be shown to be reasonable, or at

least not contrary to reason, it is not more appropriate to believe them than to believe an absurdity. Furthermore, Christians who receive the Bible as a trustworthy revelation of God must, of necessity, exercise their rational powers to comprehend and accept the propositions and exhortations contained in the Scriptures. If the Bible is truly a propositional expression of God's will as well as the basis of faith and practice for the Christian, human reason cannot be disregarded.

2. Rationalism: *Human reason challenges, and eventually undermines religious faith.* Rationalists maintain that human reason constitutes the primary source of knowledge and truth, and therefore provides the basis for belief.

Modern rationalism rejects religious authority and spiritual revelation as sources of reliable information. Beginning with the humanistic revival of the European Renaissance (14th-16th centuries), which extolled human creativity and potential, rationalism flourished during the Enlightenment (18th century), with its systematic critique of accepted doctrines and institutions. It eventually evolved into modern skepticism which questions, doubts, or disagrees with generally accepted conclusions and beliefs, and into atheism, which denies the existence of God. Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud are representatives of this position.

In its opposition to faith, rationalism argues that religions tend to support traditional and sometimes irrational beliefs and to frustrate the self-realization of human beings, both individually and collectively. Rationalists also argue that the reality of evil in the world is incompatible with the existence of a powerful, loving, and wise God as traditionally conceived by Christians.

3. Dualism: *Faith and reason operate in separate spheres, neither confirming nor contradicting each other.*

Many contemporary scientists, some

of them Christian, maintain that science deals with objective "facts," while religion addresses moral issues from a personal, subjective perspective. Therefore, the spheres of activity of reason and faith, of knowledge and values, are unrelated to each other.⁶

Bible-believing Christians are not willing to accept this position. They argue, for example, that Jesus Christ as portrayed in the Gospels is not only the center of their faith as God incarnate, but also a real Person who lived on this Earth at a particular time and place in human history. They contend that the events narrated and the characters presented in the Scriptures were also real and part of the historical continuum, as evidenced by a growing volume of documentary and archaeological evidences.

Any attempt to separate the spheres of reason and faith relegates the Christian religion to the realm of personal feelings, individual subjectivity, and ultimately to the level of fanciful and irrelevant myth. Both Christians and non-Christians hold to varying and frequently contradictory beliefs. If these cannot be distinguished as to their truthfulness or falsehood by the use of reasonable evidence and argument, then no belief whether religious or philosophical, can claim reliability and allegiance.

4. Synergy: *Faith and reason can collaborate and strengthen each other in the human quest for and commitment to truth.*

Proponents of this position maintain that Christianity constitutes an integrated and internally consistent system of belief and practice that deserves both faith commitment and rational assent. The realms of faith and reason overlap. Truths based on faith alone are those revealed by God but not discoverable by reason (for example, the Trinity, salvation by God's grace through faith). Truths to which we may arrive through both faith and reason are revealed by God but also discoverable and understandable by human reason (for exam-

ple, the existence of God, the objective moral law). Truths ascertained by reason and not by faith are those not directly revealed by God but discovered by human reason (for example, physical laws, mathematical formulas).

C. S. Lewis, the renowned Christian apologist, argued that in order to be truly moral, human beings must believe that basic moral principles are not dependent on human conventions. These concepts possess a transcendent reality that makes them knowable by all humans. Lewis further maintained that the existence of such principles presupposes the existence of a Being entitled to promulgate them and likely to do so.

If the real world can be comprehended by human reason on the basis of investigation and experience, it is then an intelligible world. The amenability of this world to scientific inquiry both at the cellular and galactic levels allows human beings to discover the laws that provide evidence for intelligent design of the most intricate kind. This extremely elaborate design of all facets of the universe, which makes possible intelligent life on this planet, speaks of a Designer.

Therefore, religious experience and moral conscience can be seen as signs of the existence of the same Being that scientific research envisions as the intelligent Designer of the cosmos and the Sustainer of life.⁷

Reason can help us move from understanding to acceptance and, ideally, to belief. Faith, however, is a choice of the will that goes beyond reason. Careful thinking, under the Holy Spirit's guidance, may remove obstacles on the way to faith. Once faith is already present, reason may strengthen religious commitment.⁸

Faith and reason in biblical perspective

The Hebrew worldview, as reflected in the Old Testament, conceived of human life as an integrated unit that included belief and behavior, trust and

thought. During most of their existence, the people of Israel accepted as a matter of fact the reality of God, whose revelations were documented in their Scriptures and whose supernatural interventions were evident in their history. For them, the enemy of belief in the true God was not unbelief but the worship of pagan deities, mere products of misguided human imagination. Their goal was not theoretical knowledge but wisdom—the gift of right thinking that leads to right choosing and right living. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10).

The New Testament reflects the transition toward a different cultural context, in which Hebrew monotheism had already become fragmented into various Jewish sects, and had also been influenced by Greco-Roman polytheism, emperor worship, and agnosticism. As the early Christian Church interacted with this religio-philosophical environment, it began to articulate the distinction and the relationship between faith and reason, granting to faith the position of privilege in the life of the believer.

Bible teaching with respect to faith and reason, particularly in the New Testament, may be summarized in the following propositions:

1. The Holy Spirit both awakens faith and illumines reason. If it were not for the persistent influence of the Holy Spirit on human consciousness, no one would ever become a Christian. In our natural condition we do not seek God (Romans 3:10, 11), acknowledge our desperate need of His grace (John 16:7-11), or understand spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2:14). Only through the agency of the Holy Spirit we are drawn to accept, believe, and trust in God (John 16:14). Once this miraculous transformation has occurred (Romans 12:1, 2), the Holy Spirit teaches us (John 14:26), guides us “into all truth” (John 16:3), and allows us to discern truth from error (1 John 4:1-3).

2. Faith must be exercised and developed all through life. Each human being has been given a “measure of faith” (Rom. 12:3)—that is, the basic capacity to trust in God—and each Christian is encouraged to grow “more and more” in faith (2 Thessalonians 1:3). In fact, “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 11:6). Hence the plea of an anguished father to Jesus, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24) and the insistent request of the disciples, “Increase our faith!” (Luke 17:5).

3. God values and appeals to human reason. Although God's thoughts are infinitely higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8, 9), He has chosen to communicate intelligibly with humankind, revealing Himself through the Scriptures (2 Peter 1: 20, 21), through Jesus Christ who called Himself “the truth” (John 14:6), and through nature (Psalm 19:1). God wants to “reason together” with us (Isaiah 1:18). Jesus frequently engaged His listeners in dialogue and reflection, asking for a reasoned response (see, for example, His conversation with Nicodemus, John 3; and the Samaritan woman, John 4). At the request of the Ethiopian official, Philip explained a Messianic prophecy found in Scripture so that he might understand and believe (Acts 8:30-35). The believers in Berea were praised because they “examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true” (Acts 17:11). The ultimate goal of life is to know God and to accept Christ as Saviour; such personal knowledge leads to eternal life (John 17:3).

4. God provides sufficient evidence to believe and trust in Him. The unbiased observer can perceive in the natural universe a display of God's creative and sustaining power (Isaiah 40:26). His “invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen” and understood by “the things he

has made (NRSV).” Those who, in spite of the evidence, deny His existence and creative power “are without excuse” (Romans 1:20). However, when Thomas expressed doubts about the reality of Christ’s resurrection, Christ provided the physical evidence and challenged him to “Stop doubting and believe” (John 20:27-29). When we are confronted with questions regarding the origin of the universe, our point of departure should be faith based on God’s revelation: “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” (Hebrews 11:3).⁹

5. God offers clear guidance for life, but accepts the choices we make. In the Garden of Eden, God gave to Adam and Eve the power of choice—to obey or disobey Him—and warned them of the terribly sad consequences of choosing the latter (Genesis 2:16, 17). Speaking through Moses, God reiterated the options: “I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction.... Now choose life, so that you and your children may live” (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19). His appeals to human conscience are exquisitely courteous: “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20). Above all, God seeks from His creatures love, obedience, and worship that are freely chosen and reasoned (John 4:23, 24; 14:15; Romans 12:1 [*logikén* = reasonable and spiritual]).

6. Faith and reason work together in the believer’s life and witness. Paul stated that the acceptance of Christ as Saviour depended on a rational understanding of the gospel: “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). Christians are expected to be “always...prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that

you have” (1 Peter 3:15 [answer = *apologían* in Greek, defense, justification; reason = *lógon* in Greek, a word, an explanation]). Peter also encourages Christians to “make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge” (2 Peter 1:5, 6).

Dealing with questions and doubts

Let us now look at the practical implications of what we have examined. How should Bible-believing Christians deal with the tension that inevitably arises between their faith and their reason when they face conflicting issues in their study, research, or life experience? The following suggestions can help:¹⁰

1. Remember that truth is inseparable from God. God created us as rational, inquisitive creatures. He is honored when we exercise our mental abilities to explore, discover, learn, and invent as we interact with the world that He created and sustains. Whenever we use our rationality and creativity in an attitude of humility and gratitude, we are loving God with our mind. Believers should not be afraid of study, research, and discoveries. If there are discrepancies between “God’s truth” and “human truth,” it is because we misunderstand one or the other or both. Since in Christ “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3), all truth is God’s truth.

2. Accept that the Bible does not tell us everything there is to know. God’s knowledge is infinitely broader and deeper than ours. For that reason, He had to condescend to our level in order to establish communication with us, within our ability to comprehend. As Jesus told the disciples, “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear” (John 16:12). In addition, our human fallenness impairs and limits our understanding. “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). The Bi-

ble can be approached as a book of history or literature or laws or biography. But its main purpose is to help us know God and to teach us how to become friends with Him and live godly lives in preparation for eternity. In the New Earth we will have the time and the opportunity to explore and learn from the vast complexity of the cosmos and its inhabitants.

3. Distinguish between God’s Word and human interpretations. Human traditions and preconceived ideas frequently make us read things into the Bible that are not there. A sobering example is the case of Copernicus (1473-1543), who, on the basis of his study and observations, proposed that the planets, including the Earth, revolved around the Sun. Since most astronomers still accepted Ptolemy’s geocentric theory, many religious leaders of that time considered Copernicus’ ideas heretical. They believed that because of the importance of human beings and the centrality of this Earth in God’s plans, the Sun and planets must revolve around the Earth. When Galileo and Kepler provided evidence in favor of Copernicus’s views, the discovery did not destroy God or Christianity.

Three centuries later, Charles Darwin argued against many theologians of his time, who believed in the absolute fixity of the species, which is not required by the Bible narrative. Not many years ago, some Christians stated that God would not allow humans to travel in space or land on the Moon. Again, those statements were proven wrong, showing they were based on personal interpretations and extrapolations.

4. Realize that the scientific enterprise is an ongoing exploration of one segment of reality. Experimental science deals only with phenomena that can be observed, measured, manipulated, repeated, and falsified. Contrary to the impression that one gains from many science textbooks and the popular media, modern experimental science fre-

quently leads to adjustments. True, many of the basic laws are universally accepted. But as scientists continue their research, they take for granted that theories and explanations that were accepted for years may be replaced by other theories and interpretations that seem more accurate and reliable.¹¹ As a matter of method, scientists work in their disciplines within a naturalistic framework, which excludes the supernatural. Many of them are agnostics or atheists; however, their beliefs are not based on scientific evidence but on personal choice. Scientists who are open to the possibility that God exists, find in the natural world abundant evidence that there is an Intelligent Designer who planned and sustains the universe and life.

5. Create a mental file for unresolved issues. Some questions will inevitably arise in our studies, in our life's experience, and even in the Bible for which we don't have satisfactory answers. In some cases, we find an explanation later. In other cases, questions remain unresolved. A classic example is the tension between our belief in an all-powerful, loving God and the suffering of the innocent. Although there are abundant evidences of God's power and care, we cannot fully understand why human tragedies and natural disasters occur in a universe in which He is sovereign. As other believers before us, we try to make sense of this and other deep mysteries. The best we can do with these issues is to suspend judgment, keep studying them prayerfully, and seek the counsel of mature believers. Some day we will gain a new insight into the mystery or God will make these contradictions clear to us. Faith in God and recognition of our own mental limitations demand that we learn to live with some uncertainties and mysteries.

Conclusion

As a way of illustrating the main thrust of this essay, we can depict our

mind as a court of law that operates every day of our lives, its integrity and freedom protected by God Himself.¹² At court our individual will sits as the judge, while reason and faith are the lawyers that bring evidence to consider and witnesses to present their views. The evidence and the testimony they provide comes from a wide variety of sources, which include: the influence of people we love and respect, the feeling of loving and being loved, our social interaction and dialogue with others, observations of the natural world, spiritual experiences in prayer and service, readings and research, joys and sorrows of life, individual and collective worship, response to beauty in the arts, effect of our habits and lifestyle, and the search for inner consistency and authenticity.

Our will sifts daily through this multiplicity of emotional, spiritual, rational, and aesthetic perceptions and data, comparing them with the code—our worldview.¹³

At times, the arguments advanced will be accepted and will strengthen our faith convictions. At other times, the evidence presented will trigger an adjustment in our worldview and a modification of our beliefs. These changes, in turn, will have an impact on our conduct. Other times, the will prefers not to decide. Sitting courteously in the background, the Holy Spirit is ready to speak a word of caution, correction, or affirmation. Other voices, perhaps of uninvited observers, are also heard in the courtroom, raising objections, presenting contrary evidence, and insinuating doubts. The court of our will continues to deliberate until the last day of our conscious life.

As thoughtful Christians, we are called to love God with both our mind and our will, integrating in our life the demands of faith and intellect. For the educated believer, there is "no incompatibility between vital faith and deep, disciplined, wide-ranging learning, between piety and hard thinking, between

the life of faith and the life of the mind."¹⁴ In order to nurture these three facets of our God-given abilities—faith, intellect, and will—we must deepen daily our friendship with God and our commitment to truth. He trusts that, in the face of the evidence available to us, we will be intelligent decision-makers.¹⁵

Humberto M. Rasi (Ph.D., Stanford University), recently retired from being the director of the General Conference Education Department, and continues to be the editor-in-chief of Dialogue.

Notes and references

Unless otherwise noted, all Bible passages in this essay are quoted from the New International Version.

1. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1952), p. 17.
2. *Ibid.*
3. In the same book, Ellen G. White defines faith crisply: "Faith is trusting God, believing that He loves us and knows best what is for our good" (p. 253).
4. "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder" (James 2:19).
5. See Hugo A. Meynell, "Faith and Reason" in *The Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought*, edited by Alister E. McGrath (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 214-219.
6. Stephen Jay Gould, the recently deceased author and teacher of the history of science at Harvard University, declared that "the conflict between science and religion exists only in people's minds, not in the logic or proper utility of these entirely different, and equally vital subjects." In his view, "science tries to document the factual character of the natural world, and to develop theories that coordinate and explain these facts. Religion, on the other hand, operates in the equally important, but utterly different, realm of human purposes, meanings, and values." (Quoted in Houston Smith, *Why Religion Matters* [Harper San Francisco, 2001], pp. 70, 71).
7. The Apostle Paul argues thus: "Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them" (Romans 2:14, 15).

Continued on page 16.

Creationism: Still valid in the new millennium?

by George T. Javor

Creationism is a robust paradigm, fully capable of undergirding the scientific enterprise.

Creationism is not for the faint-hearted. It is based on a 3,500-year-old assertion found in the Bible: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1, NIV). Most contemporary scientists, however, believe that life resulted from a huge explosion of primeval matter billions of years ago. To believe in creation is to run against the tide.

“Nothing in biology,” wrote Dobzhansky, “makes sense except in the light of evolution.”¹ The editors of *Science* magazine, introducing a special issue on evolution, stated not long ago: “The intellectual concepts arising from our understanding of evolution have enriched and changed many other fields of study.”² In the same issue, Stephen Jay Gould wrote: “Organic evolution. . . [is] one of the firmest facts ever validated by science.”³

The standard creationist response to such declarations is to point out flaws in the evolutionary arguments. But creationists are at their best when they show that their explanations work better than the evolutionary ones. Their goal should be to develop their paradigm so well that people will have to admit, “Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of creationism.”

With that as a background, let us consider a few aspects of creationism still valid for the 21st century thinking Christians.

1. Is creationism a religiously motivated paradigm?

Yes. Efforts to present creationism in a secular wrapping distort its central thrust. At the very core of creationism is

the Creator. The Bible teaches that the Creator is intimately involved with nature, and yet not part of nature. It follows that religion cannot be divorced from science. While science may be practiced without any reference to religion, the interpretation of such efforts may be flawed.

Of the great civilizations, the one in Western Europe gave rise to modern science, with emphasis on experimentation and mathematical formulations.⁴ Several cultures of antiquity, the Chinese and Arab among them, produced higher levels of learning and technology than medieval Europe. Yet it was in Europe that modern science was born. Heavily contributing to this was the Judeo-Christian faith, with its confidence in the laws of nature.

The supposed conflict between religion and science is a recent invention and a distortion of historical realities by a class of historians (led by John Williams Draper and Andrew Dickson White), whose agenda was to destroy the church’s influence. The currently popular secularism in science may only be a detour in the history of science.

2. What are the perceived liabilities of creationism?

- a. Creationism originated in a pre-scientific world, where myths abounded. The biblical story of creation is often compared with the Babylonian and other creation stories.
- b. Creationism rests on the notion that there is a Supernatural Being, which cannot be verified scientifically. Moreover, if this is true, then

ours is a capricious world, subject to the whims of supernatural powers. Science is not equipped to study such a world.

- c. Creationism restricts the range of inquiries, because by definition, there is no point studying the origins of life or the relationships between organisms.
- d. Creationism implies accountability. Then humankind is not the supreme authority in the world.

Responses to these observations:

- a. The fact that a creation story exists in different ancient cultures suggests a common source for these stories.
- b. The Supreme Being of the Bible created a world with laws that were either given or which can be discovered. Humans are mandated to subdue and care for creation, using these laws. There appears to be no caprice in the routine operation of nature. Nevertheless, the creationist paradigm permits divine intervention in nature, when known natural laws are superseded. Creationists believe that past divine interventions of great significance have been explained to humanity by special revelations. Modern science went astray when it discarded supernaturally revealed information relevant to science.
- c. Whether the creationist paradigm is restrictive has to do with one's perspective. A person's understanding of reality will dictate his or her range of inquiry.

3. Is science hindered or helped by creationism?

The creationist worldview was a strong motivating factor for scientists to study nature—to actually experiment and see how God ran the world. These were the “voluntarist” scientists who opposed Aristotelianism (which held

that the universe and everything in it had to be made by laws of logic, which Aristotle himself discovered). Prominent voluntarist scientists who practiced scientific experimentation and measurements were Van Helmont, Robert Boyle, and Isaac Newton.

The biblical doctrine of creation assures us that we live in an orderly world ruled by the Supreme Lawgiver. This is in stark contrast to the pagan worldview, which saw nature as alive and being moved by mysterious forces. Thus, the doctrine of creation was a positive and possibly a decisive contributing factor to the birth of modern science.

4. Is there explanatory power in creationism?

Science to a great extent is explaining. The acid test for the value of a paradigm rests in its explanatory power. Here are some examples:

- Elements of design, seen in nature at every level, follow naturally from creationism.
- The great diversity among organisms can be viewed as a reflection of the Creator's unbelievable range of imagination.
- Interaction between and mutual support among organisms is a testimony to a benign design.
- The burden to explain how living matter came into existence is lifted. So is the burden of having to connect every organism together through phylogenetic trees.
- Creationism is helpful in light of the exceptional fidelity of genetic reproduction on the one hand and the very limited range of possible changes that can be accomplished by mutations. (It has now been shown, for example, that the bacterium *E. coli* remains *E. coli* even after thousands of generations in the laboratory.)
- Not all manifestations of the biosphere have to do with survival values. There is more to life than mere

survival. If survival were the only criterion, we would see a much starker and sparser world. Creationism frees us from having to explain why there are both uni and multicellular organisms, and why there is an absolute requirement for two different genetic types of organisms (male and female) to coexist.

- Common features among organisms are understood to come from the same Designer. For example, similarities in metabolic pathways generate common metabolic needs, which can be satisfied by common food sources. Diverse features support the ability of organisms to fill different niches and to preserve their identities. Differences among organisms also reflect the Designer's obvious penchant for variations.
- Instead of asking, How an organism is successful in carving a niche for itself, we ask, How does this species contribute to the good of the biosphere?
- The puzzle of the chicken/egg is solved. The chicken came first.
- The cause for existence, from atoms upward is understood to be the expressed will of the Creator. The Adventist understanding of creation emphasizes that the Creator was not dependent upon pre-existing matter. We hold that matter is not infinitely old, that it was created.
- A characteristic of a designed entity is that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Design and organization enable components of complex systems to cooperate for the expression of new functions. Layers of reality may be arranged to show the appearance of new functions at each successive level. (See Figure 1.)
- Predation, toxic plants, viruses, and the suffering and death of non-plant organisms do not fit into a scheme conceived by an all-wise

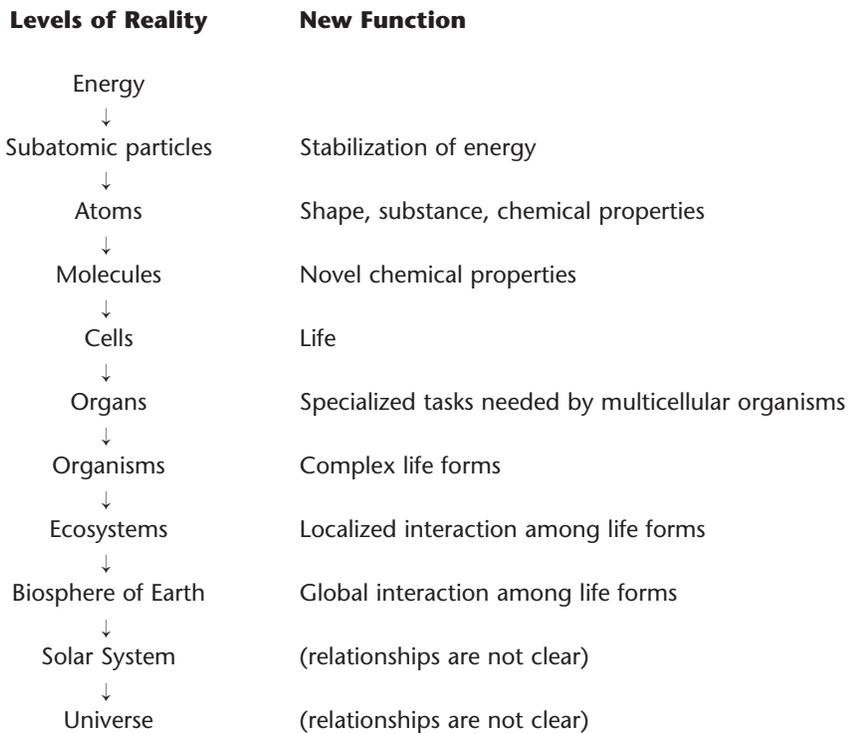


Figure 1. Reality is organized into increased levels of complexity.

Creator. The creationist paradigm assigns these to the work of an evil power in nature. This concept is most helpful when we consider the immense sophistication seen in the operation of living matter, all of which appears to go for naught—that is, to the eventual demise of the organism.

5. Can we make scientifically testable predictions using the creationist paradigm?

Creationism has been criticized for not leading to testable predictions. Wrong paradigms may lead to testable suggestions, but that does not necessarily make for a good hypothesis. It makes it a testable hypothesis.

When a paradigm's prediction is tested and the results are different than predicted, sometimes the paradigm is altered, but often the test results are interpreted so as to allow for the continua-

tion of the paradigm's validity. When the Viking Missions to Mars found no evidence for life on the Martian surface soil, even though microbial life was predicted by the chemical evolutionary paradigm, the adjustment was made to postulate the existence of living organisms deep within the Martian soil.

The creationist paradigm suggests that rather than creating a few species, the Creator generated a rich variety of living organisms. Therefore, it would be surprising to find planets populated with microorganisms alone.

Other predictions that follow from the creationist's position are:

- The biosphere is complete. No new orders of organisms are expected to arise. (The creationist paradigm nevertheless is comfortable with new species arising within the same order.) All current organisms have recognizable ancestors.

- No living organisms will arise abiotically.
- The fossil record will suggest a rich variety of organisms coexisting from the beginning.

6. Theological insights from Creationism.

- Science cannot be divorced from religion. Theologians must not give up the realm of physical reality entirely to the scientist. They may not be able to contribute to the understanding of how physical realities operate in nature, but they have a grave responsibility to advise scientists on the clearest meaning of supernatural information that has bearing on science.

To illustrate this, we may imagine a scientist from elsewhere in the universe visiting Earth a week after its creation. Not being told of the recent creation event, and observing mature organisms and well developed trees in the Garden of Eden, this well meaning scientist would conclude that Earth had been around for some time. The conflict regarding the age of the Earth is caused by the fact that dating techniques all but ignore the possibility of a mature Earth appearing suddenly.

- Humanity is accountable to the Creator for the way we utilize nature's resources.
- The Creator's wisdom and sophistication are documented by countless examples in nature. It needs to be emphasized that He is not only the Designer of the world, where objects and organisms are integrated into a coherent setting, but He brought all of it into existence and has sustained it for thousands of years. Contrast this to the famous "Biosphere" experiments, which showed how difficult it is

Continued on page 30.

He is risen indeed!

by David Marshall

The case for Christianity

rests on the bodily resurrection

of Jesus.

As the first great front runner of Christianity contended, "If Christ was not raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your trust in God is useless" (1 Cor. 15:14, NLT). The resurrection is a fact of history. Without it Christian belief is invalid.

Two Jewish authors (Joseph Klausner and Pinchas Lapide) and four lawyers (Ross Clifford, Simon Greenleaf, Charles Colson, and Frank Morison), having examined the evidence from either a neutral or a hostile perspective, reached the conclusion that it had indeed been a "historical event." Each of the four "witnesses" (the Gospel writers) passed their most rigorous tests. The form and style of the Gospel writers were different. The minor discrepancies in their testimonies were sufficient to demonstrate that there had been no collusion and that they represented the evidence of eyewitnesses.

All the alternative explanations of the empty tomb are based on the 18th century "closed system" belief: That the resurrection of Jesus could not have happened because it was not repeatable. Modern authors have taken the view that the universe is more like a great thought than a great machine. They are apt to take the view that the case against miracles is acceptable only if every report of a miracle has been investigated and found to be false.

Historians do not force the evidence to fit a preconceived conclusion, but permit it to speak for itself. Here we examine the nature of the sources, the evidence for the death of Jesus, and the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus.

Nature of the sources

F. C. Baur (1792-1860), with many of his contemporaries, assumed that the four Gospels had, in the main, been written in the second century and that the miraculous content represented the embellishment of wishful thinkers. John A. T. Robinson, who had belonged to Baur's school of criticism, reached the conclusion, after years of research, that all the Gospels, including the fourth, were written before A.D. 70. He scolded the earlier critics for their scholarly "sloth" and "almost wilful blindness."

R. T. France, after an examination of Robinson's redating of the New Testament books, wrote, "It is, I believe, probable that the sum and perhaps all of the Gospels were written in substantially their present form within thirty years of the events, and that much of the material was already collected and written a decade or two before that."

The accounts of the resurrection and appearances of Jesus are to be found in Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20; and 1 Corinthians 15. These are the sources that contain the testimonies of the witnesses.

John Wenham reconciles the apparent discrepancies of detail among the accounts. The lawyers who have examined the Resurrection testimonies have been reassured by the variations in detail. One authority concludes, "In such cases the surface discrepancies do not mean that nothing happened; rather they mean that the witnesses have not been in collusion."

Those who first presented the Resurrection message did so in Jerusalem and

within a few hundred yards of the empty tomb. Any of those listening could have made the short trip and ascertained whether the tomb was, in fact, empty. Instead, 3,000 were converted to the good news of the Resurrection in one day (Acts 2:24, 41); 5,000 on another day (Acts 3:15; 4:2, 4; and “a large number of priests” (Acts 6:7).

Evidence for the death of Jesus

Before the Crucifixion verdict was pronounced, the Roman governor had already ordered that Jesus be whipped. The 39 lashes of the *flagrum* across shoulders, back, and legs of the prisoner would cut through the subcutaneous tissue, would render the back an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue, and would cause arterial bleeding from blood vessels in the underlying muscles. Many did not survive 39 lashes.

In the recent past, Israeli archaeologists have learned much about crucifixion from an excavation on Mount Scopus. A seven-inch spike was driven through both heel bones. A heavy wrought-iron spike was driven through the front of the wrist. Muscular pain would be excruciating. Air would be drawn into the lungs that could not be exhaled. Carbon dioxide would build up in the lungs and the bloodstream. Death would come by suffocation.

Romans were grimly efficient with crucifixion. There were no survivors.

Evidence for the Resurrection

Two wealthy Jews prepared the corpse of the crucified Jesus for burial. They would willingly have relinquished all their wealth and influence for one vital sign that He was alive. The women were witnesses. There were no signs of life. Jesus was buried.

A stone, which a modern authority has estimated would have weighed between one-and-a-half and two tons, was rolled over the entrance of the tomb. On the Sabbath—the next day—the Jewish authorities went to the Roman

governor and asked that the tomb be secured by a guard. A seal was placed on the stone so that it could not be removed without the knowledge of the authorities, and a guard was posted (Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42; Matthew 27:57-66).

Whether the guards were Jewish or Roman, the story that they were bribed to tell—that the body had been stolen by the disciples while they were sleeping—would not have been passed on except by the frightened, the unintelligent, or those who had a strong vested interest. How could the guards have known who stole the body if they were asleep? “Soldiers and priests and Pilate evidently believed that something supernatural had happened,” wrote John Wenham. “Hence the willingness of the authorities to screen the soldiers.”

Among the many difficulties is the evidence of the broken Roman seal; those responsible, if apprehended, would have automatically been executed. The idea that a group of disciples would have taken on either the temple guard or a detachment of a Roman legion in order to take the risk of breaking a Roman seal is preposterous. One authority says: “No approach to the origin of faith in Jesus’ resurrection will get far unless it realises what a shattering blow his crucifixion had been for his followers. His execution had been followed by an horrific crisis of faith.” ““We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel”—*had hoped*, past historic tense—was how one disciple expressed it (Luke 24:21, NIV). Resurrection morning found the disciples in a state of shock and spiritual disillusionment. They were not prepared for Jesus’ resurrection.

It took an objective encounter with the risen Jesus to crystalize the disciples’ faith in Him and to cause them to proclaim His resurrection. Visions and subjective experiences would not have done it. Something had to be seen, something real.

The Resurrection witnesses identified the risen Jesus with the earthly Jesus. “After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days” (Acts 1:3, NIV). When Jesus is said to have been *seen* or to have *appeared*, the disciples saw Him with ordinary vision. ““Look at my hands and my feet,”” He said. ““I have seen the Lord!”” the witnesses announced (Matthew 28:17; Luke 24:34, 39-46; John 20:14, 18, 20; 1 Corinthians 15:5-8). Jesus is reported to have *spoken* (Matthew 28:9; 18-20), to have *walked* (Luke 24:13-16), to have *distributed food* (Luke 24:30), to have *eaten* (Acts 1:4), to have *performed signs* (John 20:30), to have *given a blessing with His hands* (Luke 24:50), to have *shown His hands and His side* (John 20:20), and to have *been touched* (Matthew 28:9).

The empty tomb was the indispensable Exhibit A of the launch of Christianity in Jerusalem. If Joseph’s new tomb had not been empty, the very-much-under-pressure Temple establishment would have simply aborted the movement by making a brief trip to the sepulchre and parading the body of Jesus around the city. “They did not do this because they knew the tomb was empty. Their official explanation for it—that the disciples had stolen the body—was an admission that the sepulchre was indeed vacant.” Both Roman and Jewish sources and traditions acknowledge an empty tomb. The sources range from Josephus Flavius to a compilation of fifth-century Jewish writings called *Toledoth Jeshu*. If a source admits a fact decidedly *not* in its favor, then that becomes strong evidence that the fact is genuine.

The high priests and the Sanhedrin had shown great political skill in handling Pilate. It would have required little skill on their part to have handled Christ’s followers had they known the location of the body. Instead, the Jewish authorities were reduced to hauling the

disciples in from time to time in order to threaten them with death if they did not stop preaching the risen Christ (Acts 5:17-42). There was little else they could do—with the tomb empty, a strong impression on their part that something supernatural had occurred, and a growing number (including priests) embracing the truth of the Resurrection.

Frank Morison entitled his compelling account of the evidence, *Who Moved the Stone?* That question must have baffled those who wanted to believe that the disciples had stolen the body. A stone weighing between one-and-a-half to two tons had been removed. Matthew said that a large stone was “rolled...in front of the entrance to the tomb” (NIV). The Greek verb “to roll” is *kulio*. In his account of the position of the stone after the Resurrection, Mark had to use a preposition with the verb. In Greek, as in English, to change the direction of a verb or to intensify it, a preposition is added. Mark added the preposition *ana*, which means “up” or “upward.” Mark’s word, *anakulio*, can mean “to roll something up a slope or incline.” Luke adds to the picture by adding a different preposition, *apo*, which means “a distance from.” So the stone was not just moved! It was moved *up a slope, for a distance*.

John (chapter 20) uses a different Greek verb, *airo*, which means “to pick something up and carry it away.” Even had the soldiers been sleeping, they would have had to have been deaf not to have heard a stone of that size being moved in that way.

The appearances of Jesus were not stereotyped. He appeared in a different manner in a variety of locations. Mary Magdalene at first approached Him as the gardener. To those who walked to Emmaus, He came as a travelling companion. To the apostles in the upper room He appeared (twice) when the doors were closed. On another occasion, He prepared breakfast for them on the Galilean shore. Then, also in Galilee, He appeared to 500 at one time.

Reactions varied from fear, being overwhelmed with emotion, to obstinate incredulity. When Christ appeared to Paul at Damascus, He was appearing to His foremost enemy. Women saw Him first; had the Resurrection accounts been concocted, women would *never* have been included in the story, let alone as the first witnesses.

Circumstantial evidence

- The existence of the Christian Church. How could such a movement be founded on a lie? Why would men described by an enemy of Christianity as being of “pure and austere morals” allow themselves to be beaten, imprisoned, tortured, and executed for a lie? If this were a fraud on the part of such people, why, under pressure of death, did not at least some of them break and recant?

- Believers’ baptism. This showed a preoccupation with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, a rite that dates to the earliest years of the primitive church. To become a Christian, it was necessary to identify publicly with the death, burial, and resurrection of its founder (see Romans 6:3-9).

- Changed lives. Gethsemane’s cowards became Pentecost’s heroes. This is inexplicable without the Resurrection. Had prestige, wealth, and increased social status accrued to new believers when they professed Christ and His resurrection, their profession would be logically understandable. In fact, however, their “rewards” were of a different type, eventually involving lions, crucifixion, and every other conceivable method of stopping them from talking. The revolutionary change in the lives of the early apostles has been replicated millions of times in the two millennia of Christian history.

The inadequacy of opposing arguments

The arguments usually brought against the resurrection of Jesus do not

stand up to thoughtful investigation.

- That the authorities removed the body of Jesus. If either the Jewish or the Roman authorities had removed and reburied the body of Jesus, all they had to do in the ensuing days and years to quash Christianity was to say, “We gave orders to remove the body,” and then to show where His body had been buried or disposed of. That action was not taken.

- That the disciples removed the body. The disciples could neither have taken on the Temple guard nor a unit of Roman soldiers, nor could they have removed the stone.

- That the women went to the wrong tomb. This theory holds that the women were so distraught that, in the dimness of early morning, they went to the wrong location. The seal and the guard, one imagines, would have made the right tomb conspicuous even in the first light of dawn. Nevertheless, this theory falls because had the women gone to the wrong tomb, the high priests and the other enemies of the faith would rapidly have gone to the right tomb and produced the body.

- That Jesus swooned and revived in the tomb. This theory teaches that despite the flagellation and loss of blood, the spikes in the ankles and the wrists, the hours of exposure on the cross, and the spear in His side, Jesus somehow survived. This theory first appeared in the 18th century when, apparently, it was possible to believe that a person could survive burial in a damp tomb without food or water or attention of any kind; that He could survive being wrapped in heavy, spice-laden grave-clothes; and that He could then summon up the strength to extricate Himself from the grave-clothes, push away a heavy stone from the mouth of the tomb, overcome the guards—and walk miles on pierced feet to be hailed as Conqueror of Death and Prince of Life. David Strauss, a noted 19th-century critic who did not believe in the Resurrec-

tion, rejected this idea. He wrote: "It is impossible that one who had just come forth from the grave half dead, who crept about weak and ill, who stood in need of medical treatment, of bandaging, strengthening, and tender care, and who at last succumbed to suffering, could ever have given the disciples the impression that he was a conqueror over death and the grave."

• That the risen Christ appeared only to believers. That is not true. Thomas, at first, was not a believer. It seems likely that James, the brother of Jesus, was not a believer when the risen Christ appeared to him; certainly he had been an unbeliever during Christ's earthly ministry (1 Corinthians 15:7; Mark 3:21; 6:3, 4; John 7:5). From the fact that James is listed among the 120 disciples who were together in Jerusalem at the time of the ascension and from the fact that Paul, an opponent of Christ, was

converted following an encounter with Him, it is clear that some became believers and witnesses *after* seeing the risen Christ.

Richard Swinburne, who recently examined the case for the Resurrection from the scientific, rationalist position, reached the conclusion that "the detailed historical evidence" is "so strong" that, "despite the fact that such a resurrection would have been a violation of natural laws, the balance of probability is in favour of the resurrection." A dispassionate lawyer or historian would have to consider the case proven.

David Marshall (Ph.D., University of Hull) is a historian and the author of many articles and several books. This article is based on his essay "The Risen Jesus" included in The Essential Jesus, edited by Bryan Ball and William Johnsson, and published by Pacific Press in 2002.

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Faith, reason...

Continued from page 9.

8. See Peter Kreeft and Ronald K. Tacelli, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994), pp. 29-44.
9. "God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith." Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* [Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, n.d.], p. 105.
10. Adapted from Jay Kesler, "A Survival Kit," *College and University Dialogue* 6:2 (1994), pp. 24, 25.
11. Thomas Kuhn, in his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd edition (University of Chicago Press, 1970) showed how scientists work within a mutually accepted conceptual paradigm that changes with time.
12. I am indebted to Michael Pearson for the basic structure of this illustration, which I have elaborated here. See his essay, "Faith, Reason, and Vulnerability," *College and University Dialogue* 1:1 (1989), pp. 11-13, 27.
13. A worldview is a global outlook on life and the world that each mature individual possesses. Worldviews answer four basic questions: Who am I? Where am I? What is wrong? What is the solution? See Brian Walsh and Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1984).
14. Arthur F. Holmes, *Building the Christian Academy* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 2001), p. 5. See also William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1994).
15. See Richard Rice, "When Believers Think," *College and University Dialogue* 4:3 (1992), pp. 8-11. Rice is the author of the book *Reason and the Contours of Faith* (Riverside, Calif.: La Sierra University Press, 1991).

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How shall we worship?

by Lilliane Doukhan

It is the transformation of the heart that will guarantee a genuine format of Christian worship.

We all worship in one way or another. Even those who do not believe in religion, worship. They worship sports icons, music idols, or money. We are created for worship. God's creation of Adam and Eve on the sixth day, the day preceding the Sabbath, has a deep significance, both theologically and sociologically. The Creator intended that, in the lives of human beings, worship must take priority over any other human activity. It is this priority that demands of God's followers that they not only worship, but also worship in the right way. The fact and manner of worship cannot be taken for granted.

What is the right form of worship? Is there only one correct form or style? Have worship forms changed over time? Who decides which form or format is appropriate? Setting aside personal opinions and preferences, we need to discover the answer from God's Word.

The meaning of worship

The Scriptures provide us various models of worship. One of the clearest is in Isaiah 6:1-8 where the prophet relates his vision of a heavenly worship scene. This passage presents us with a program of worship, even an order of worship.

The chapter opens with a vision of God on His heavenly throne, a vision of beauty, power, majesty, and reverence. Here we learn first *why* we come to worship: to respond to God's presence and His call for worship.

The Psalms—Israel's traditional worship and praise texts—help us find out *how* to worship: in joy and reverence. The theme runs through the Psalms and

is expressed in phrases such as, "Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord...Come, let us bow down in worship" (Psalms 95:1, 6, NIV).

To balance between joyfulness and reverence presents a challenge. In worship services, we often practice one to the exclusion of the other, and somehow cannot find a way to combine the two. It seems difficult to be reverent and at the same time to be joyful. But this is what God's Word tells us to do in worship.

The Bible also presents worship as a wholistic activity. Worshipers are to approach God through their entire being. Biblical worship involves the spirit, mind, and physical senses. Isaiah 6 speaks of worship as involving the four senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, and touching.

Worship is also a corporate act: We come to God as a body of believers. This involves both vertical and horizontal dimensions. Often in worship, we interact with people around us to a limited degree, but true worship must bring us closer not only to God but also to the body of worshipers. Because our churches are more and more multi-cultural and multi-generational, the horizontal dimension has become a challenge. Each of the different groups aspires to express worship in its own way.

Further, when we come to worship, we need to find out *whom* we worship. Worship is not something we do for ourselves. Worship is meant to be done *for God* and *to God*. It is a God-centered activity, entirely focused on Him (see Psalms 9:1, 2). We do not come to worship primarily to get blessings, to learn

something, or to have fellowship. The main purpose of worship is to come to God, to give Him glory, and to speak about His deeds.

Worship, then, is a partnership experience: God, on one hand, initiates the call to worship, and the worshiper responds to this call.

For worship to take place it must be meaningful to both partners. Meaningful worship is *pleasing* to God. Psalm 19 is clear on this point: "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight" (Psalms 19:14, NIV). Yet, how often we have endeavored to please the congregation when we put together a worship service!

Motivation determines our thinking and organization regarding worship. The first concern we need to harbor in our hearts whenever we deal with forms and formats of worship is: "*Is this going to please the Lord?*" When we want to please someone, we attempt to find out what the person is like: "What is his or

her character? What does this person like to do? How does this person relate to us?" We need to ask the same questions to find out what will please God. Answers discovered will address our quest for *appropriateness* in worship.

But worship must also be meaningful to the worshiper. It is important to find out whether the worship service is relevant to our congregation, i.e., whether our congregation will find meaning in the worship service. This brings us to the importance of symbols. Meaning in worship is conveyed through symbols, such as the Lord's Supper, baptism, Scripture reading, prayer, music, architecture, etc. They all are "signs" meant to convey the meaning of worship and should help worship come alive and be *relevant*.

This is a difficult task. And it is even more difficult to combine the two, appropriateness and relevance. How can worship be pleasing to God, and at the same time relevant to the congregation?

How can we combine the divine element of call and the human element of response in our worship experience?

The forms of worship

The worship service belongs to the entire congregation, not just the pastor. On this we need to educate our congregations as well as our pastors, worship leaders, and music leaders. Our worship and music leaders often come to serve the congregation with their talents and their good intent. Musicians, especially trained in particular skills, need to remember that worship is a very special moment. In worship you do not just "make music." In worship you do not just "interact" with the congregation. In worship you do not just "read a text." You do all these things in the presence of God, and for God.

True worship, in its essence and its forms, starts with learning and teaching about it. Education, role modeling, mentoring, and preparation of leaders and the congregation are all ingredients in this learning process.

Learning about worship raises important questions: Is there a particular style or format that God likes best? Is there one best way to worship? Is there one way for everybody around the world to worship? Scripture makes it clear that it is not so much the *style* or *format* of worship *per se* that matters to God. What God is looking for is the condition and attitude of the worshiper's heart. The highest expectation in worship, in the eyes of God, is "a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart" (Psalms 51:17). God does not like our sacrifices, our forms of worship, when we do not walk the talk "to act justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with [Him]" (Micah 6:8, NIV).

It is, therefore, the genuine transformation of the heart that will guarantee a genuine format of worship. Whatever format we use, if we do not come with a changed heart, it will be meaningless. In

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a global, multicultural body such as the Adventist Church, wherever we worship, the same *principles* must guide our understanding of *what* worship is. Derived from the Word of God, they are unchangeable and eternal, independent of time or place. Where we diverge is in our *expressions* of worship, in *how* we worship. We need to determine what attitudes, shaped by our culture, will best express *reverence*. Here, the real question is: “Will this particular mode of expression within a given culture truly be understood as expressing reverence to God?”

The same is true for joyfulness. There are different ways of being joyful. Some jump and shout, others are quietly joyful. Whatever culture we live in, we need to discover the most truthful way to express the joy that comes from biblical worship. What kind of joy should we expect to experience in worship? Is there a difference between the kind of joy we experience in worship and the celebration we experience at a football game or music event? The joy that comes from worship is very special and not common. It is in some way similar to our human joys, but it is also very different. Nehemiah’s account of the dedication of the walls of Jerusalem after Israel’s return from the exile says that they were “rejoicing because God had given them great joy” (Nehemiah 12:43, NIV). Thus joyfulness in worship is a God-given joy, the result of our encounter with Him and of what He has done for us. Our quest for this God-given joy is very important because it will shape our expressions of worship: the way we behave during worship, the music we do, and *how* we do that music.

Form and content go hand in hand, in worship as well as in every art form. Just as in art, so in worship: If the message transmitted by the *form* is not the same as that carried by the *content*, we will end up in false art or false worship. The image of pipe and water illustrates

the issue of cultural expression. While pipes may be of different materials—metal, plastic, cement—they all can convey water. Similarly, different cultural expressions can convey a particular truth. One thing, however, is important: We must ensure that when the water comes down to us and when we drink of it, it is still the *pure*, unadulterated water, the truth. If this water changes in its chemical composition, it can become a poison. Certain channels or pipes can change the nature of the water. If I use a lead pipe to transport my water, the water will ultimately pick up enough lead to make me sick. The essential of life can become a cause of sickness. If our form of worship in some way adulterates the message we want to convey, it is not an appropriate form of worship and we need to change it. On the other hand, if it conveys truthfully the message of worship, even if it is not the traditional form, then it *is* an appropriate form for worship.

One of the difficult realities of worship is that it comes with a tension, as we have noted: between the human partner and the divine partner in worship; between expressions of joy and reverence; and between appropriateness and relevance. It is a healthy tension because it constantly challenges us in our worship. This tension requires that we spare no effort to find a sound balance between the two elements. This task cannot be done by one person alone; it takes the entire congregation to ensure that our worship is pleasing to God.

In the perspective of this tension, any discussion about forms and formats of worship takes on a new direction. The issue is no longer to choose *between* styles—which would mean that there are some styles better than others—but to make choices *within* a given style. A multiplicity of styles is available for proper worship, and within each style we must choose those elements that ap-

propriately convey true worship values.

The questions are not: Is it O.K. to clap in worship? Is this style of music acceptable? Should we use drama in worship? Should we kneel or stand for prayer? Forms and formats of worship are not the goal or purpose of worship. They are now results and consequences of our reflection on worship. At this point, new questions will arise and govern our quest for true worship:

- How can we capture a sense of holiness in worship?
- How can we shape the worship service so that the worshiper is led to focus on God rather than on the music or the preaching?
- How can we express joy and reverence in worship and maintain a balance between the two?
- What worship expressions can help the congregation to become better practitioners of their faith, i.e., practice mercy and justice, the signs of true worship?
- How can our worship service communicate our message to the world?

We need to relearn how to worship. The secret to achieve this is to relearn how to connect with God on a personal level. Corporate worship starts on the level of personal worship. As we learn to know Him better, and how to come closer to Him, as we learn how to address ourselves to Him and how to relate to our fellow worshipers, we will discover how to make our worship services more meaningful.

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Marilyn Fargo

Dialogue with an Adventist specialist in conciliation.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9, KJV).

Very few have translated the beatitudes into be-in-action. Marilyn Fargo is an exception. She is the education specialist for Peacemaker Ministries, and spends her time resolving conflicts and training other Peacemakers.

Marilyn attended church school and academy in Idaho and went to Andrews University, where she obtained her training in elementary education. She later completed a master degree and did postgraduate work in special education and counseling. At Andrews she also met her husband, Mumtaz A. Fargo. The couple moved to Utah where Mumtaz finished his Ph.D. at the University of Utah. 1968 brought them to Montana, where Dr. Fargo taught at the Montana State University–Billings until his recent retirement.

Besides teaching and homemaking, Marilyn has always been involved in the local church. She has also mentored university students and hosted Bible study groups in their home. In the 1980s she discovered Peacemaker Ministries which has its headquarters in Billings, Montana. The organization's textbook, The Peacemaker by Ken Sande, is available on line (<http://Hispeace.org>).

Today both Marilyn and her husband are Certified Christian Conciliators trained by Peacemaker Ministries. Their goal is to prevent or resolve conflicts in homes, schools, churches, businesses, and communities through the biblical principle of conciliation.

■ Marilyn, to begin with, how did you get your passion for peacemaking?

In 1982, Ken Sande, a young Christian attorney, was challenged to consider conciliation rather than litigation. In a group studying 1 Corinthians 6, he realized that Christian churches do not follow Paul's advice to resolve conflict within their local congregations. From that recognition he began Peacemaker Ministries.

I took one of the beginning Peacemaker seminars and realized how God has given us the tools to live in harmony through His Word. Peacemaking principles benefit all our relationships. Peacemaker training enabled me to admit, apologize, and ask forgiveness when I offended someone.

■ So you and your husband both trained to be conciliators.

We wanted to deal with conflict God's way at all levels. Peacemaker Ministries generates resources and seminars to equip Christians. As we shared these biblical principles, we needed advanced training and interaction with professional Christian conciliators. We felt God brought us to Billings for this experience.

■ I understand Peacemaker Ministries offers three levels of training.

Seminars introduce Christians to biblical principles and processes for dealing with conflict. These seminars equip people to address conflict in their own lives. God provides the homework.

Reconciler training provides the information and experience to teach the principles in Sabbath school classes, small groups, and church sermons. Reconcilers share resources and may mediate between individuals using the Matthew 18:15-20 process.

Advanced training and the certification program equip conciliators to help resolve disputes, address substantive issues, and restore relationships. Courses on counseling, biblical and civil law are part of the training and are utilized during the live practicum.

■ What training do church leaders and members need who are asked to participate in the process?

We study biblical processes and examples with each client or group. Most know the biblical references, but have not applied them in real life. Everyone involved signs an agreement that holds each party to confidentiality and Christian ethics. The process is specific, and the Holy Spirit guides through the stages of counseling—overlook, discuss, and negotiate. If that does not resolve the dispute, we move to the assisted responses of mediation, arbitration, and church discipline to restore broken relationships.

For example: A student at a secular university needs to take a class that meets on Sabbath. The student checks alternatives and prays for guidance. Then he or she asks the advisor about accommodations. If there are none, the student may seek help to negotiate a reasonable solution to meet requirements for the class and still keep Sabbath, such as taping the lecture, getting

notes, or doing a project. A conciliator prays, counsels, and assists the student through the process.

Another example: A church elder is involved in an adulterous affair. One of the parties seeks conciliation. There is prayer, Scripture study, paperwork, and a goal to bring glory to God, serve others, and grow to be more like Jesus. This more complicated process includes counseling, confession, repentance, forgiveness, and redemptive discipline. With support and understanding, relationships can be healed, marriages saved, and the community of believers strengthened.

■ *What kind of cases do you see most frequently?*

Because I am involved with training for Young Peacemakers, I provide in-service training for faculty, parents, students, and churches. I also conduct practicums to equip others to be trainers.

I often deal with disruptive behaviors of students and help schools design rules and processes to promote peace and positive relationships. Peacemaker Ministries has developed a curriculum for grades 2-6 and is completing one for grades 7-9. I also work with families facing divorce, estate settlement, or workplace issues. We also draft conciliation clauses for contractual agreements.

■ *The seminar seems like something we could all benefit from. Is it recommended for assistance in our private lives?*

Exactly. The seminar opens with the "slippery slope" concept, explaining how people react to conflict with escape or attack responses. Scripture offers resolutions beginning with overlooking an offense (Proverbs 19:11), through the steps of Matthew 18:15-20, and ending with redemptive church discipline by "treating the offender as an unbeliever." That last step means that the person "doesn't get it," and we start all over.

■ *Tell us what you mean by conflict.*

We define conflict as a "difference in opinion or purpose that frustrates someone else" as described in James 4:1-2. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin (John 16:8) and a conflicted person will realize that genuine peace may be found only through Jesus Christ.

■ *How do you educate people about reconciliation in a troubled congregation?*

We begin with a seminar and invite all members and require leaders to attend. We also invite non-attending and former members. Concurrently, we may also have a Youth Peacemaker program. We then schedule interviews and encourage reconciliation through mediation. We usually have a board meeting to discuss the ongoing application of the principles. We like to end with a church family "Celebration of Reconciliation" that includes communion. I write a spiritual report detailing the process, list recommendations, and keep in contact during the year to support and encourage accountability.

■ *How do most people respond to the process?*

I know churches and organizations that have peacemaking seminars and small groups to train members. They encourage confession, repentance, and forgiveness to heal relationships. Each leader and member is held to a high degree of accountability.

We find that most need information and direction about this process and are grateful when they experience God's peace in relationships. Christians should be encouraged to take unresolved conflicts to the church family.

■ *Peacemaking also has political aspects. How can citizens anywhere in the world bring these principles into use in their secular communities?*

When people study God's way of dealing with conflict, they immediately find opportunities to address issues. Micah 6:8 gives an answer to a Christian

citizen's role: "To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (NIV). War and conflict in the world had its root in Lucifer's assault against God's government. God urges His followers to seek peace. The Great Controversy model shows how God deals with conflict. He did not abuse His authority. He offered reconciliation. Through Christ, He gave us the ministry and message of reconciliation. We are His ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

Peacemaking principles are crucial in every aspect of life. A common source of conflict is rebellion against authority in the church, government, family, or workplace. All legitimate authority has been established by God for the purpose of maintaining peace and order (Romans 13:1-7). When a person in authority instructs you to do something that you believe is unwise, unfair, or sinful, it is appropriate to make a respectful appeal and negotiate solutions (Esther 7:1-6; Daniel 1:6-16).

If our witness is to be effective, we should have something to show the world that it does not possess. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spelled out the differences between worldly troublemakers and Christian peacemakers. The Golden Rule is still valid: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matthew 7:12, NIV).

■ *Should peacemaking be taught in Adventist schools?*

Teaching students to respect, work with each other, and address issues is the foundation for their leadership. Those schools that are beginning to teach and implement these principles are being blessed.

I believe we should offer more training in conflict resolution with biblical peacemaking in our colleges and universities. Most graduating students don't have the skills needed to deal with inev-

Continued on page 31.



Ruy Vieira

Dialogue with an Adventist creationist in Brazil.

His parents had little or no interest in religion, and they hardly cared about passing Christian beliefs to their children. His teachers all the way through high school were agnostics and evolutionists. Fed on a steady diet of these twin systems, Ruy Carlos de Camargo Vieira was ready to face university education as an intellectual, untainted by Christian claims. But the road to Damascus passes by each individual, and when Ruy entered the university, he found himself on that dangerous road. He was confronted by One he did not yet know. The philosophic tent of agnosticism and evolution that sheltered him thus far was blown over by another set of beliefs that had its origin not in human reason but in divine revelation. For the first time, he read in the Bible about origins, about God's love, grace, peace, and freedom from sin that He gives so freely. The new discovery made sense to Ruy, and he pursued the study of the Bible with great vigor and speed. Soon he became a Seventh-day Adventist. From agnosticism to faith, from evolution to creation—it was not simply a discovery, but the dawn of a divine perspective on life.

That turned Ruy's life around. Eventually he became one of the most active and prominent scientists who have promoted and defended Creationism in Brazil. The new road was not easy. For a scientist to openly confess creation is to invite professional ridicule. But Ruy persisted in his discovery. In 1972 he founded the Brazilian Creationist Society, and published the first volume of the *Folha Criacionista* (Creationist Journal, in Portuguese), which now has more than 60 issues. He continues to be the president of the society, in addition to his university teaching and writing on creation. He also serves as a consultant for the Brazilian Government at the Education Ministry and as the treasurer of the Brazilian Bible Society.

■ How did your interest in Creationism begin?

It began after I became an Adventist. As I began to keep the Sabbath, I found that it was necessary for me to know more about the issue of origins, especially that of creation as it stood in opposition to evolution, which has become the "academically correct" view.

■ Why did you choose to be a creationist?

Becoming a creationist is a logical consequence of becoming a Christian. To be a Christian is to accept Christ as Saviour and His revealed Word as divine

and normative. The Bible speaks of God creating a perfect world, and then of the temptation and the entrance of sin with all its degenerative consequences. Just before I graduated from the engineering course, I came in touch with Christianity, and that changed all my perspective. I discovered that the claims of evolution cannot be squared with the Christian claim of creation. From the Bible, I discovered that behind all life there is a creation brought about by God who has instilled in the universe a purpose and a design. God helped me overcome the difficulties on my journey from evolu-

tion to creation. I praise God for this! Today, I can relate through basic scientific principles the image of a perfect world created by God and its degeneration due to sin. Moreover, I can integrate this newfound discovery with the subjects I taught as a university teacher, subjects such as the First and Second Laws of Thermodynamics involving philosophical considerations about the concept of entropy, order and disorder, directionality, decadence, and degradation. I can see in all the fields of human knowledge a perfect coherence between the creation paradigm and a genuine scientific perspective.

■ Tell us something about the Brazilian Creationist Society of which you are the president.

As a teacher and as a parent, I helped my sons in their secondary school work, and I noticed how evolutionistic ideas were presented in almost all the textbooks. As a creationist, I was concerned how subtly these evolutionist ideas became the sole perspective from which social, political, economical, scientific, and technological courses were taught. Thirty years ago, by God's providence, I learned of creationist societies outside of Brazil that were trying to counter evolution and provide an alternate view of origins. I found out how these societies work and went through the basic approaches by which they deal with the controversies between creation and evolution. Then I decided that it was time Brazil, too, had a similar society. So in 1972, the Brazilian Creationist Society was founded, with the first issue of its Creationist journal.

■ *What are the main differences between creationist and evolutionist models?*

Creationism begins with the assumption of a planned, designed, and purposeful universe. Evolution's assumption is different: There is no planning in nature—all things happen by chance. Basically, both creation and evolution are philosophical and not scientific assumptions.

■ *What is a model or theory?*

The study of the universe requires certain systematization, with a methodology to study and establish hypotheses. The study involves certain preconceived theses, which in turn requires the construction of hypotheses. It is right here that the whole philosophical structure of science begins. A model is always a mental structure thing that intends to reproduce "reality." What happens is that many hypotheses end being accepted and disseminated as absolute and "scientific" truths, when in fact, they are not.

■ *Is it possible to integrate faith and science?*

The question raises other questions: (1) Can a Christian be a scientist today? Can a scientist be a Christian? (2) Has modern science destroyed the basis for Christian faith? (3) Does faithfulness to Christianity imply the rejection of all scientific claims? (4) Do we have to accept that science and Christian faith are two incompatible fields? (5) Has science proved the Christian faith as some Christians affirm? (6) Does the present scientific development require a new science and technology that will be more adequate for the new millennium?

Such questions can be answered in a satisfactory way so that we can legitimately speak of one being a Christian and a scientist at the same time, without the need to declare that science is always secular and therefore has nothing to do with Christian claims. That's why we should avoid a false dichotomy be-

tween faith and reason. For sure, faith and reason are both essential aspects of all human activities, including science and theology. Both make assumptions (faith) and both draw conclusions (reason). The faith that the universe is rationally comprehensible is a scientific hypothesis. The faith in this hypothesis does not only motivate the scientists to investigate but it also makes research possible and efficient. The same faith can prove to be a reasonable conclusion that derives from biblical teachings concerning a created universe by a rational God. In this way, science and faith are not mutually exclusive concepts. As the Christian naturalist philosopher Blaise Pascal once affirmed, science is an activity "of following God's thoughts."

■ *Can one be an evolutionist and believe in the Word of God at the same time?*

No. Evolution and the Bible are antithetical. The Bible is creationist. It is impossible to harmonize evolution with biblical claims without destroying the basic claims of both. We cannot scientifically "prove" either models, because they are philosophies.

■ *Is it possible to accept the Bible but not believe in the literal claims of Genesis 1?*

Free interpretation of the biblical text can produce different understandings. However, I believe that the content of Genesis 1 is historical, and therefore, must be understood literally. A denial of the literal authenticity of Genesis 1 leaves us with no ground for the understanding of the Sabbath, the origin of sin, the plan of salvation, and eventually the Second Coming. The entire Christian faith-edifice collapses without the foundation of Genesis 1. Those who do not accept the literal authenticity of Genesis 1 have not studied its content under a broader view—from the origin of history moving to its ultimate climax. Your readers may appreciate some of these broader perspectives provided in volumes 52 and 53 of the *Creationist*

Journal.

■ *What evidence of design do you see in the universe?*

Much, for sure—from the macrocosm to microcosm. For example, take the structure of substances such as the organic levogyrous molecules that have to do with life. How can we explain their appearance in living organisms by chance, considering that there are also similar dextrogyrous organized structures? If we took everything as being randomly and more or less chaotically brought about, would not everything be disorderly, so that there would not be specific atoms that could be organized in the chemical table? (The very existence of a chemical table where we can make certain predictions concerning the characteristics of the elements implies an order, which is contrary to disorder, typical of a random process.) If we consider the Solar and the Earth systems, our galaxy and other galaxies, we can see a coherent and logical structure to the point in which we are able to establish a design. The very fact of science—which presupposes that certain causes will result in specific effects—implies a universe with design.

■ *What is today's greatest challenge against the concept that asserts "God is the Creator"?*

What Paul called "false science" (1Tim. 6:20) is still the greatest threat to creation. True science and true religion converge in their objectives, but a "false science" has preconceptions, dissidences, arrogance, and pride.

Interview by Roberto de Azevedo

Roberto de Azevedo is the director of education of the South American Division and regional representative of Dialogue. To contact the Brazilian Creationist Society, log on: <http://www.scb.org.br>.

Labeling or loving?

by Denise Badger

A miracle happens when we choose to love instead of label.

In the children's classic, *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice, just before meeting Tweedledum and Tweedledee, enters the wood-of-no-names and encounters a fawn. "Neither the fawn nor Alice can remember their names. No matter. They walk a ways together, Alice with her arms clasped lovingly around the soft neck of the fawn, until they come to the edge of the wood. Once there, the fawn suddenly remembers its names and looks at Alice with horror. 'I'm a Fawn,' it cries out, 'and dear me! You're a human child! Terrified, it runs away.'"¹

When I read this, I got frustrated... annoyed, really. Why didn't Alice and the fawn just go back into the wood? Or better yet, why couldn't they see how great they got along when they had forgotten their perspective "labels," and gone on to enjoy a lasting friendship through the rest of Wonderland? Apparently, it's just too much to ask for, even for a fairy tale.

Then I read another story, and my thinking got whiplash. John 9 describes a scene where Jesus and His disciples came upon a blind man on the street. The disciples stopped. To help? To care? To listen and love? Hardly. They stopped instead to label. "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2).² Forget that this man is a fellow human being in need. Forget that he's been rejected and ignored all his life. Forget that he is right in front of them, within earshot of everything being said.³ The disciples looked at him and saw, not a person, but a problem, a theological problem to be solved, and they invited Jesus along on their trip for truth.

But Jesus didn't go. Refusing to label, He chose to love instead. Where the disciples saw a blind man with problems, Jesus saw a blessed man with promise. When the disciples were ready to move on to prove truth and theology—the "heart of religion"—Jesus chose to stay and live the truth, showing that true religion is when you see and care with your heart (see James 1:27). The disciples wanted a solution; Jesus waited for a miracle.

Jesus refused to label. Why? Because He saw the hope of this man's future rather than the problems of his past. It wasn't about who this man had been or what he did, but about what God was going to do with him instead. "This happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life" (John 9:3). Jesus made it clear that you have to be willing to see the way God sees if you're going to be a part of the miracle He wants to make happen.

The miracle is hard to see

But sometimes the miracle is hard to see because we are so accustomed to using labels. Labels are so practical and easy. We slap them on all sorts of containers and folders (and people) to help us know what's inside. There is no uncertainty with labels. You know what to expect, and you don't have to think. Read the label, and you *just know*. And there is great comfort with thinking one is in the know. There is a sense of familiarity and control because, with a label, the unknowns are practically gone.⁴

I read once about a boy who thought he knew what he had in his hands when he was tossing rocks into the ocean. Rock

after rock went flying into the water until the pile he had found in the seaside cave was just about gone. And then, somehow a couple of rocks banged up against each other and broke open, revealing inside, not mere mud and muck as he had thought, but diamonds in the rough! Imagine the sickening feeling he must have had as he looked out into the ocean remembering all the hundreds of gems he had just thrown away.

Unfortunately, the same thing can happen with people. When we label people, we miss seeing the miracle. When we stop at the surface, we miss seeing the treasure inside. Consider again John 9:1. Jesus "saw a man blind from birth." The Greek word for "saw" suggests that Jesus looked with a searching look, beyond the surface. Jesus looked into the heart and soul of this man to see what others had missed—to see the miracle. The disciples saw the outward man only and wanted to move on. Christ said, Wait, there's a miracle about to happen here! God is going to do something great, working through us as we're open to Him. "As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me" (John 9:4). As long as we are living and breathing, there is a work we've been called to do...to *love*. Not to label. Not to judge. Not to toss aside...but to *love*. "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35).

Jesus stayed and healed the man, giving him back his sight, his self-esteem, his place in society. Jesus stayed to love. And when the man was kicked out of the temple, labeled and shunned by the powerful and the popular of the religious world, Jesus found him again and

gave him an eternal vision, to see beyond the blindness of religion, to see the God of love. And “the man said ‘Lord, I believe,’ and he worshiped him” (John 9:38). It was a day for miracles.

The sure promise

The promise of Jesus is sure: “Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things” (John 14:12). I would like to suggest that you and I can do as Jesus did, and begin to heal one another today. Where there is brokenness, we can make whole; where loneliness, connect-edness. It happens when we open our eyes and hearts to see like Jesus, to take the time for even the simplest of relationships, to reach out to those whom others forget and pass by. To love instead of label.

Once a visiting pastor posed a question to us, a group of ministers, to help us evaluate if our church was on track in following after the heart of God. It was a simple question: *Is your church loser-friendly?* Do those whom society has labeled as “losers” feel respected, listened to, and valued in your church? When they see themselves through your eyes, do they recognize the miracle God put inside them, the miracle waiting to happen?

It made me stop and think, not just about my church, but about myself, personally. Am I loser-friendly? Do I really respect, listen to and value those whom I, or others, label as “losers”? I was intrigued with the question and bothered at the same time. Intrigued because, in its simplicity, it made me stop and appraise my own heart and inner thoughts, the place where no one sees. Bothered because the question seemed to violate the *very intent and purpose* of the question. You see, in asking the question, “*Am I loser-friendly?*” I found myself having to first sort through the list of people I knew and attach a label “*loser*” or “*non-loser*” to them. The act of sorting, labeling, and naming was actually building

up the very walls I wanted to tear down, and it made me wish for another reality. A reality that would be too much to ask for, even for a fairy tale. *Wouldn't it be great*, I thought, *if someone asked that question to our church and in all sincerity and bewilderment we looked at them and asked*, “What’s a loser? We don’t have anyone around here who fits that description!” *Wouldn't it be great if we had, like in Alice's wonderland, a church-of-no-names*, but one where there were no edges to come to, no walls, no labels to remember—a church of *no names!* A place where we saw each other as God sees, where we look for and celebrate the miracles waiting to happen. A church, like the one in Ephesians 4 where, with God and each other, it is “joined together, growing and building itself up in love”! Sometimes it seems impossible, and yet...

Jesus showed us that it is more than possible! It is more than a fairytale wish, but a reality that you and I and God can make happen, one moment, one person at a time. It happens when we choose to love instead of label. When we recognize that all of life, and each of us is a work in progress—a miracle waiting to happen, a diamond in the rough. You see, when we recognize that everyone is in process, this allows us to add a “yet” to all our assessments of one another.⁵

Bill isn't much of a leader...yet. Marie never listens...yet. Mark doesn't have patience...yet. We can't judge someone or write him or her off or close the book until it is finished. No one has won or lost until the race is over. When we see like Jesus, we refuse to judge, or label, or toss aside, *because God is still at work.* It is in believing that we will see the miracle, the beauty, the treasure in everyone we meet, if we take the time to look, and listen, and care beyond the surface. In places where you see deficiency, look instead for the growing edge of things to come, to see each other at the beginning and anticipate the discovery of unknown miracles to come. God calls His

disciples, you and me, to help make it happen. He calls us to join together, while it is still day, to do the work of God. And what is that work? To love like there's no tomorrow, so the glory of God can be shown! “By this, all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Look again before you label, and expect to see a miracle!

Denise Badger is the associate pastor of Forest Lake Seventh-day Adventist Church in Apopka, Florida, U.S.A.

Notes and references

1. Quoted in Rachel Naomi Remen, *Kitchen Table Wisdom* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996).
2. Bible texts in this article are quoted from the New International Version.
3. See Max Lucado, *A Gentle Thunder* (Dallas Texas: Word Publishing, 1995).
4. Remen, *Opus cit.*
5. *Ibid.*

Dialogue for you, free!

If you are a Seventh-day Adventist student attending a non-Adventist college or university, the Church has a plan that will allow you to receive *Dialogue* free while you remain a student. (Those who are no longer students can subscribe to *Dialogue*, using the coupon on page 18.) Contact the director of the Education Department or the Youth Department in your Union and request that you be placed in their distribution network for the journal. Include your full name, address, college or university you are attending, the degree you are pursuing, and the name of the local church of which you are a member. You may also write to our regional representatives at the address provided on page 2, with a copy of your letter sent to the Union directors listed above. If these communications fail to produce results, contact us via e-mail: ssicalo@yahoo.com

The stranger in the road

by Ivan T. Blazen

The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) calls us to minister in love and compassion to those suffering strangers who lie in our pathway. My father was once one of these. Here is his story.

Born in Croatia, in the former Yugoslavia, my father's mother brought him to the United States as a boy. All his life he had wanted to return to his homeland, and now, with ticket in hand, he was set to go.

The departure date was approaching when he called me one morning. I was a teacher at Andrews University at the time. He told me he had experienced something like an explosion in his head the night before, and now felt weak and could not walk a straight line. I surmised that my father had suffered a mini-stroke. I urgently admonished him, "Do not go to Yugoslavia, Father, but to a doctor." He was a very strong-willed person, but acceded to my appeal. The physician examined him, took tests, and released him with instructions to return in a couple of days to discuss his test results. The time came but, instead of returning, my father announced, "I feel O.K. I'm going to Yugoslavia." And he did.

While he was there, I received a postcard from him. He was in Split, a city on the coast of the Adriatic. He described the area as being beautiful beyond words. But, he said, the pace was fast—he was traveling with friends—and he felt so...The sentence was not completed. There was only a drooping line where his pen had run down the card. This unsettled me.

The date came when he was to return

home. My brother waited for him at the airport in Detroit. A long line of people got off the plane, but Dad was not among them. My brother called me right away. Two words flashed before my mind, "Heart attack." I assumed I would receive some word about my father, but no word came until two days had elapsed! Then a telegram arrived with a very short message, "Father in hospital. Heart attack." Nothing was said about how or where he was. I thought I would surely receive another message telling me more, but no further word came.

Finally I decided to call the United States embassy in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia. A soft-spoken Yugoslavian woman came on the line. She kindly responded to my story with the promise to look for my father and telephone me. The next day she called. "I am so sorry, Mr. Blazen. Your father has had a massive heart attack and is in the hospital critically ill." She spoke tender words of comfort to me.

I realized my father was going to die and fervently desired to be with him before that happened. I had never been to Yugoslavia and needed some advice on staying there, perhaps for an extended time. I procured a substantial list of Yugoslav students studying at Andrews. My fingers ran down the list, and I randomly picked the name of a married seminary student. During my visit, he gave me many good tips and said he would make certain preparations for me. In a short time, I was on a plane to Yugoslavia. Would I get there in time?

I later learned what had happened to my father. On the day before he was to

return, he visited the birthplace of Marshal Tito, the former president of Yugoslavia. My father had admired Tito very much because of his fight against the Nazi invaders during World War II. The birthplace was at the foot of a very high, steep hill. At the top was a souvenir shop and restaurant. My father was about two-thirds of the way up the hill when he felt a massive pain in his chest. It was a heart attack. Nevertheless, he climbed the last third of the hill. Staggering to the top, he collapsed.

It was then that unanticipated things began to take place. I had grown up in a Catholic family. When, as a teenager, I became an Adventist, much to the consternation of my parents, this inaugurated an extremely difficult time with my father. He was angry beyond measure and rejected me as his son.

Little did I know that from the time of his collapse on that Croatian hill to the end of his life he would be very much involved with Adventists. From the hilltop, my father was rushed to a clinic seven kilometers away. There a Seventh-day Adventist doctor gave him a shot in the heart that kept him alive until he got to the hospital in Zagreb. Her sister, also an Adventist physician, worked in that very hospital. She began to visit my father, as did an Adventist nurse on staff.

Unbelievably, the parents of the wife of the Yugoslav seminarian I had called upon for help lived next door to the hospital! This Adventist couple visited my father every day. They brought him food, which he was too weak to eat, and juice, some of which he could drink. They touched his very pained body.

They turned him one way and then another. They lifted him up and put him down. Above all, they talked to him about Jesus. One day, in light of their conversations with him, they asked if he had given his heart to the Lord. In full sincerity he said, "Yes." He came close to the Lord because, as in the parable of the Good Samaritan, someone came close to him, a stranger in the road, in care and compassion.

All this was taking place before I arrived in Yugoslavia. It was beyond anything I could have imagined. But more was to happen. Getting off the plane in Zagreb, I was unexpectedly met by a tall, well-groomed man who announced he would take me to the hospital. This undoubtedly was due to the "preparations" the seminary student said he would make for me. As we drove to the hospital I said to my generous host, "I suppose you are a minister here in town." He responded, "You might say that I am something like that." In fact he was the conference president! What an honor. Here I was, just a stranger in the road, and the conference president came to help me. What a contrast to the two ministers of religion in the parable, the priest and the Levite, who refused to minister to a wounded stranger.

It was an incredible moment when I walked into my dad's hospital room. He had no idea I was coming. He was sitting up on the edge of the bed with the nurse supporting him. When our eyes met, I saw the look of unbelieving joy in my dad's face. A torrent of emotion swept through me. I had made it. My father was still alive. God's blessing was clear.

When we began to talk, my father said things I will never forget. He, for whom I had such longing for years that he come to know his Lord and the Adventist faith, said to me, "If they make people like this, then I want to be a part of this people. You are a righteous people." The "people like this" were the Seventh-day Adventists who had been

visiting and caring for him, a stranger in their road.

A little later, my father said, "If I live to get out of here, I want to be baptized into this people." Unbelievable! What had led him to this place? Not doctrine, but Adventist people radiating the love of Christ.

This accords with something that happened several weeks before my father made the journey to his homeland. Each year at Andrews University, Yugoslavs from all over North America come together for a few days of camp meeting. It dawned on me that I ought to invite my dad to these meetings where he would hear his native language spoken and music played on instruments he himself played. He accepted the invitation and thoroughly enjoyed all that took place.

At the church service on Sabbath, Theodore Carcich, the big, strapping Croatian vice-president of the General Conference, then retired, was speaking. At one point in his sermon, he began to talk about the mark of the beast. This worried me with my Catholic father right next to me. He wasn't ready for this. I began to pray, "Dear Lord, help Elder Carcich talk about something else." Suddenly Elder Carcich switched thoughts and said: "In the area of the state of Washington where I live are many Catholics. You know, the only way to win a Catholic to the Adventist Church is to love him." Elder Carcich was even more right than he knew at the time! After the sermon, as my father stood conversing with people, I asked Elder Carcich if he would be willing to meet my father. He burst forth with an enthusiastic, "Oh, yes," and moved swiftly toward my father like a Yugoslavian tank. Whomp, he threw his arms around my dad and gave him a gigantic hug. My father was a big man, but the good elder was even bigger, and all that was left showing of my dad was his stunned face. This expression of Adventist love and acceptance was extremely

moving. Elder Carcich's words and actions were a prophecy and preparation for what was to come in Yugoslavia.

One day my father said to me and the conference president standing near in his hospital room, "Put one of your hands up to the hand of the other." Our palms and upward pointing fingers came together. Then my father placed his hands around ours, looked me straight in the eye, and said, "You are my son," turned to the president and said, "And you are my friend." His words were a complete reversal of his long-ago declaration: "You are no longer my son. You have no place in this home!" Now, in my father's final hours of life, he solemnly asserted that I was his son. At that very moment, I believe, the heavenly Father was bowing low to my father's bed saying, "And *you* are *My* son."

None of the medications given so far had been effective in relieving my father's pain. As I learned later, two-thirds of his heart muscle had been destroyed in the attack, and his circulation was so poor that gangrene began to develop on his toes. His pain and feeling of cold were unbearable. I pled with the doctor to give him an even more potent painkiller. After hesitation and reflection—he was worried that a stronger medication might cause my dad's heart to stop—he agreed. He decided upon morphine which put my father into a relaxed and peaceful sleep. He stayed that way all day. Late in the evening, two people I had gotten to know convinced me to accept a dinner invitation. With my father resting comfortably, we set off by car to a distant restaurant. Upon our return it was past midnight, and I thought they were going to take me right to my hotel. Instead they asked if I would like to visit my father. I said yes, and before long I was in the critical-care unit of the hospital. In the quiet of the moment, with not even the nurse

Continued on page 31.

Action Report

General Youth Conference makes history

by Staci Osterman

They were young. They were committed to Christ. And they came from all across North America and from several other countries. When 400 of them came together December 18-22, 2002, at Pine Springs Ranch in southeastern California, they created history—the first annual General Youth Conference (GYC), dedicated to achieve their sole passion to become the generation that would complete the spreading of the three angels' message.

The idea began with a group of Adventist students from public universities such as Rutgers, Princeton, and the University of Michigan, as well as from several Adventist colleges. They shared their vision with church leaders. The result was the formation of GYC—to challenge college and university students to stand for Bible truth without compromise, to live it, and to share it with others. Their theme, *Pentecost: He Will Do It Again*, reflected their belief that God would use converted young people to finish the work. The next step was to plan for a conference to train and equip youth for service.

Would a conference that offered deep Bible study, inspirational messages, and workshops on practical methods of evangelism and ministry really attract youth? The answer was an overwhelming Yes! The organizers planned for 200, but soon after registration opened, available facilities were filled to capacity with attendees swelling to 400.

On the opening night of the conference, Israel Ramos—a religion major at Andrews University, Program Director for CAMPUS (Center for Adventist Ministry to Public University Students) at

the University of Michigan, and current GYC president—addressed an enthusiastic crowd. “The founding parents of our church were almost all under the age of 25,” he told the delegates. “It was a church mostly made up of young people.” He then spoke of the challenge the church faces today. “It is in our technological generation of constant change that the youth seem to lose hold of the unchanging truths that they were brought up with. Our theme is an answer to the cry of our church to reach out to, to mentor, and to keep our youth in the precious message of Adventism.”

During the five-day conference, the youth and young adults were challenged to make a total surrender to Christ, to take a stand for truth, and to become involved in outreach ministry. “This is not just a social gathering,” said Easton Reid, a post-doctoral research fellow at the University of Kentucky. “Here there is a charge, a call to come up higher, to be holy still, to be different, and to be proud of it.”

The conference provided a networking opportunity to students at public colleges and universities. Many had already started grass-roots efforts aimed at evangelizing their own campuses, and others felt convicted to do the same. Group discussions facilitated the exchange of ideas, practical advice, encouragement, and biblical principles for campus ministry.

Most attendees at the conference commented on the emphasis placed on deep Bible study and prayer. It was not uncommon to see groups praying or to hear people discussing Bible passages. “When I woke up at five in the morning



Diverse group of youth lead worship.

and looked out of my room, I saw people having daily devotions,” remembers David Dickerson, “That is a lot different from anything I have ever seen before.”

By the end of the weekend, many had made personal decisions for Christ or baptism. “Coming here has changed my views,” says Jamie Castrejon, religious vice-president at San Gabriel Academy. “I feel new again. I had come to the spot where I was just comfortable with my religion and God.”

General Youth Conference 2002 was, by God's grace, a tremendous success. Yet this is only a beginning. The 2003 conference will be held at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, December 17-21, under the sponsorship of the Michigan Conference Campus Ministries. For more information, visit our web site at www.generalyouthconference.org

Staci Osterman, the secretary of external affairs for General Youth Conference, is a senior communications major at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Her e-mail is: ostermas@andrews.edu



The GYC Executive Board is composed of students from public and Adventist universities.

Shine, baby, shine

by Will Koenig

Twenty-four Adventist students from the Pacific Northwest's public universities traveled to Central Washington University (CWU) on April 5, 2003, to learn to light things up. "Shine NW 2003," a one-day series of seminars and outreach activities, attracted leaders and students from three states.

"It's where public campus ministry and the Adventist Church is happening," said Richard Parker, youth director for the Upper Columbia Conference. The Kittitas County churches and Agape Club, CWU's Adventist student fellowship, hosted the gathering. The local pastor, John Solomon, said they wanted to learn from people experienced in public campus ministry.

"We started a club and all kind of questions came to mind," Solomon said. Three speakers came to answer those questions—John Cress, David Hunter, and Doug Venn.

One on one

"Students are amazingly open to new ideas and less prejudiced against the idea of God than we would imagine them to be," said Cress, associate pastor of the Walla Walla College church. "Still, they've got all kinds of things competing for their attention."

"I really do think there has never been a better time to be actively engaged in the building of the kingdom of God at the university level," Cress continued. Increasingly, students are rejecting systemic and institutional styles. At the same time there is a deep hunger for truth, community and God.

While group events are useful ways to plant ideas in a large number of peo-

ple, the one-on-one relationship is critical, according to Cress. With most Christians, it was another person that became their friend and introduced them to Christ. A small group, if it is authentic, can be a great way to meet people and lead them to a relationship with Christ.

Agape Club is moving in that direction, according to Jennifer Tindall, president of the club, and a student pursuing a Master's degree in education. The club is changing its focus to activities such as comedy performances, lecture series, and game nights. "We've done some small fun stuff," Tindall said. "The emphasis of the club is changing to include a smaller family, community style—getting to know each other, making friendships instead of events." It's important not to focus on big events, according to Tindall. "It's about going out and really showing people your heart."

One percent

"College students are called the powerful one percent," according to Hunter. "If you win that one percent, you can influence the world for Christ." Only one percent of the world population graduates from college, and from that one percent come the world's leaders, said Hunter, a specialist in campus ministry with Campus Crusade for Christ. Hunter spoke on how his group reaches that one percent, and how to make disciples of them. The international organization, founded in 1951 by Bill Bright, is a ministry with a presence in every country and every major campus in the United States. "We're not competitors, we're co-laborers," Hunter said. "There are plenty of lost people out there; we don't need to be competing."

For the past two years, Shine NW has brought campuses together to network and generate more ideas. Parker, youth director for Upper Columbia Conference, said that he has seen growth at the University of Idaho and Washington

State University. The latter has held seminars and operates a restaurant as part of its outreach.

"I've seen growth on other campuses besides UI and WSU," Parker said. "We're hoping to see something started at Eastern Washington University in Cheney. We need to pay a lot more attention to the public campus ministry, not only for Adventist students, but non-Adventists as well. It's a great mission field."

On the street

In between lectures, attendees immersed themselves in some real-world evangelism. Students went door to door in neighborhoods near the campus, talking to residents and giving away packages, each with a music CD or a nine-volt battery and an invitation to attend the local Seventh-day Adventist church.

How did this street witnessing go? The reaction of Leah Kelley, a junior majoring in business at Oregon State University and president of that school's Adventist student group, was typical. "At first it was scary, but most people were very receptive. I hope something comes out of this. I hope some come to church. I hope that they realize they need God in their life. I would encourage students and church leaders to think about public campus ministry more, because there's a lot of people to be reached."

Kelley said she learned what her club could do and made contacts with other campus ministry leaders. She plans to return next year.

Will Koenig, a graduate of Washington State University, is an active student leader in campus ministry.

For more information, contact Doug Venn: venner@uidaho.edu

University students meet in Argentina

Focusing on the theme, “The Certainty of His Coming,” more than 160 Adventist students from public institutions of higher learning in Argentina, Chile, and Paraguay converged on the youth camp “Los Quebrachos” in central Argentina in June 2003 for their fifth annual session.

The meetings were organized and co-hosted by the Education and Youth departments of the Central Argentine Conference and the Córdoba Adventist Student Association. The picturesque hills and creeks characteristic of central Argentina brought a sense of peace, unity, and spiritual communion to these students who daily face challenges to their Christian faith and lifestyle in a secular environment. At the same time, the meeting offered a unique opportunity for fellowship, prayer, and renewal.

Various plenary sessions and rotating seminars were presented by several local and invited speakers, including Humberto M. Rasi (representing the General Conference AMiCUS Committee), Antonio Cremades (director of the Geoscience Research Institute, South American Office), Carlos Mesa (Education Department director, Austral Union), and Mario Vergara (Youth Department and ADRA director, Austral Union). Their presentations dealt with the cultivation

The student group gathers for a picture.



of an intelligent faith, a Creation approach to the challenges of atheistic evolution, the need for an individual response to Christ’s calling for total commitment to His mission, and practical ways of serving human needs through community projects sponsored by ADRA. The students gave personal testimonies on how they share their faith with teachers and fellow students.

The Córdoba Adventist Student Association, established in the early 1960s, is the oldest and most active among such organizations in Argentina. Most of its members attend the National University of Córdoba, whose international prestige attracts students from many Latin American countries. The Adventist Student Association plays a double role on campus. On the one hand, the group contributes to campus life by offering seminars on professional, religious, and scientific topics. On the other hand, the group has secured formal recognition from the university administration, which allows its members Sabbath privileges. They also participate actively in the life of several Adventist congregations in and around the capital city of Córdoba.

The students departed from the meeting refreshed and energized, with the desire to serve as Christ’s ambassadors in their public university campuses, while preparing themselves and others for His glorious return.

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Creationism

Continued from page 12.

to balance ecological systems.

- Even though we do not have a complete understanding of how our world fits into the rest of the universe, and what kinds of contribution we can make to it, there can be no doubt that the existence of our world has a purpose.
- The Adventist worldview is based on the profound theme of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. The Bible tells that in the last days, Satan will work mightily to deceive the world. A facet of this deception may be the theory of evolution.

Conclusion

Creationism is a robust paradigm, fully capable of undergirding the scientific enterprise in the new millennium. Wider acceptance of creationism by the scientific community in the future will depend, in part, on how well theologians can convince scientists of the priceless value of revealed information. In addition, this approach will gain greater credibility as more scientists conduct research on the basis of the creationist perspective.

George T. Javor (Ph.D., Columbia University) teaches and does research in the Department of Biochemistry, Loma Linda University School of Medicine, Loma Linda, California, U.S.A.

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Stranger in the road

Continued from page 27.

present, I approached my father's bed. He was propped up on his pillow asleep, just as I had left him. I put my hand upon him and prayed, "Dear heavenly Father, forgive my father his sins and receive him into Your everlasting kingdom." About an hour and a half later, my father died. What a privilege that I could put a benediction upon the one who had made my introduction to the world possible.

When I was just a kid, my father told me that one night he had had a dream in which he was instructed to give ten days to God. Throughout my life, I would periodically ask him if he had given God those ten days. Repeatedly he told me, "Not yet, but I will." Strikingly, I spent ten days with my father in the hospital. He died on the tenth day, a day that Catholics call "All Saints Day." I believe that my father, Catholic as he was, Adventist as he became, is now listed among the saints, and that the ten days I was with him at the close of his life were the ten days he was commissioned to give. No one should ever give up on the salvation of another. God's grace can come any time, even in circumstances of suffering, and even at the end of life.

Previous to my father's death, the night nurse made a memorable statement: "God is not good. I am good." This was not a blasphemous remark. She meant that she was doing everything she could for the comfort and healing of her patients, but God did not seem to be doing anything. Where was the evidence of His presence? But I believe God was there. His unseen presence was working through my father's suffering. God did not take away his suffering, though his death brought a halt to his pain, but His providence guided my dad to a heartfelt conversion experience, not

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merely to Adventism, but to God as loving Savior and Lord. When my father awakes, he will find himself in the loving arms of God.

Elder Carcich, you were right. The love Adventists showed led my father to the God of love. And Ellen White, you were right when you wrote, "The last message of mercy to be given to the world is a revelation of His [God's] character of love" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 415). That can only happen through us, God's servants, as we extend love and care to every stranger lying in our road.

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Fargo

Continued from page 21.

itable conflict they will face in their professions. As a result, we have people moving out from jobs, localities, and even the ministry. Through this training we learn to prevent and resolve issues such as abuse, domestic violence, adultery, and divorce. Yes, it will be a good thing to teach students in our institutions the biblical way of conflict resolution.

■ *Many Dialogue readers may be interested in being peacemakers. Any advice?*

Peace is the essence of God's character, and He gives it to those who follow Him. Peace is about working with the Holy Spirit and being committed to applying God's Word to everyday situations. Those who want to work in conflict resolution must have a daily, meaningful walk with God, and have the desire and the will to help others in problem situations.

■ *How can interested readers contact Peacemaker Ministries?*

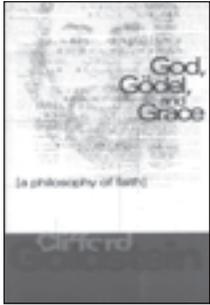
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Interview by Ella Rydzewski.

Ella Rydzewski is the editorial assistant of the Adventist Review.

Books



God, Gödel, and Grace,
by Clifford Goldstein (Hagerstown,
Maryland: Review & Herald Publ. Assn.,
2003; 111 pp.; paperback).

Reviewed by George W. Reid

Cliff Goldstein is no newcomer to Adventists. Author of 17 books and editor of the Adult Sabbath School Guide, Goldstein in the current book takes his readers to entirely new places. Adventists have not published a book like this one.

Designed for thoughtful Christians engaged in intellectual activity, including readers of *Dialogue*, the book challenges the mind to think again the primacy of God and His grace. Those who choose to plough through this book will encounter a mind-changing experience.

Goldstein begins with the complexity of the mind's struggle with cosmic issues, and then proceeds toward a resting place in the pursuit of the God who reveals Himself in the Bible. Along the way, he lifts the edges of a long series of proposed solutions to the human dilemma, only to find none truly satisfying. His citations come from many of the predominant thinkers of the Western tradition, a panorama of such breadth that the reader will find the imagination stretched to grasp all that is passing by. Such breadth demonstrates Goldstein's firm command of a wide range of material, but confronts the reader with many new challenges. For the persistent, Goldstein's work will prove very valuable.

Goldstein's language is pungent, piquant, picturesque, even florid on occasion, but never uninteresting. He fills the pages with penetrating, sometimes almost autobiographical examples. At home in mathematics and science as well as theology, he often takes moral issues and clothes them in analogous language drawn from mathematics or science. With this technique he turns traditional ideas upside down to examine their backside, making sure always that his approach remains profoundly Christian. After all the alternate explanations have been examined, Goldstein brings us to the greatest event of human history—God's intervention in human affairs at Calvary. On that hangs our confidence.

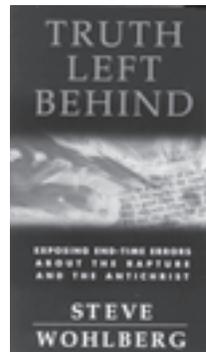
The author is at his best when visiting a panorama of human proposals advanced to answer the foundational questions that lie below all theology and philosophy. Raising a battery of questions, his proposed answers will tweak

the reader's mind. In sparkling contemporary illustrations he demonstrates the frailty of humanistic solutions, demonstrating the necessity of something beyond. The reader will be charmed by a series of wry observations such as "Time hasn't refined humanity, only our weapons" (p. 74).

In wrestling with how to define the nature of reality, Goldstein tracks through Augustine, Kant, Berkley, Hobbes, Rousseau, and a host of others. Equally impressive is his grasp of cosmology, mathematical proof, and the character of good and evil.

For Christians seeking Truth in today's often bewildering confusion, this book will be both an answer and an antidote: answer to issues that challenge one's faith in God's amazing grace, and antidote to much confusion flying within today's world. No serious Christian thinker will want to miss reading this book.

George W. Reid (Th.D., Dallas Theological Seminary) is a former director of the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.



**Truth Left Behind: Revealing
Dangerous Errors About the
Rapture, the Antichrist, and the
Mark of the Beast,**

by Steve Wohlberg (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific
Press Publ. Assn., 2001; 192 pp.,
paperback).

Reviewed by Nancy Vyhmeister

Steve Wohlberg grew up Jewish but accepted Christ at age 20. His subsequent study of endtime prophecies has resulted in two books: *Exploding the Israel Deception* and *Truth Left Behind*. The content of this second book is covered in two smaller books, *Antichrist Chronicles* and *Left Behind Deception*. Wohlberg is the speaker/director of Endtime Insights Ministries, based in Forth Worth, Texas. His television series, based on the books, has been aired on Christian as well as commercial stations. (For more information on the author and his work go to <http://www.endtimeinsights.com>.)

In *Truth Left Behind*, Wohlberg counters the endtime scenario of the enormously popular *Left Behind* novels by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. He points to the three erroneous pillars of their theology: (1) the Rapture takes place seven years before the Second Coming; (2) the ones who

are not raptured have a second chance during the seven-year tribulation; and (3) the Antichrist, a lone individual, appears only during the tribulation, so that the faithful who have been raptured escape persecution and the mark of the beast. Wohlberg traces the basis for this erroneous teaching to the work of futurist Jesuits Ribera and Bellarmine (late 16th century), later adapted by Darby and popularized by the Scofield Bible in the early 20th century.

With the passion of one compelled by “orders from above” to speak the truth (p.165), in 192 small pages, Wohlberg presents biblical teachings on the Second Coming, the Antichrist, the two beasts of Revelation 13, the women of Revelation 12 and 17, Babylon, law and grace, the Sabbath, the image of the beast, and the mark of the beast. He gives in detail the traditional Adventist interpretation. He also adds his own details, such as the conviction that the two horns of the lamb beast represent “a special teaching of Jesus Christ” (p. 109), the separation of church and state. At the same time, each chapter summarizes the section of *Left Behind* that he wishes to counter.

Wohlberg knows his Bible, at least in English. Yet I’m not sure that God’s people are called to “overcome where Lucifer failed” (p. 169). Perhaps that is a slip of the pen, rather than a theological mistake. He has used copious additional sources, many of them from the 19th century. Interestingly, Le Roy Froom’s four volumes of *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* are not even quoted.

Wohlberg has attempted to write the results of his research in a popular style; but phrases such as “sizzling apocalyptic message” (p. 17) or “a truth so shocking it can hardly be written” (p. 147) seem more appropriate to tabloids than to scholarship.

The book is billed as a sharing book, but the perspective is WASP (White Anglo-Saxon, Protestant). Given its North

American focus, it will be best understood in this context. Yet, it is a useful presentation of endtime prophecies. Adventists who read it will learn to share their beliefs and counter the position of those who accept the Rapture. Evangelicals who read it will learn of the errors of dispensationalism. *Truth Left Behind* will need a great deal of softening to be palatable to Roman Catholic readers.

Nancy Vyhmeister (Ed.D., Andrews University) is a former professor of missions at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.



Fulgores de esperanza: Las ocho profecías escatológicas más importantes de la Biblia,

by Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (Miami: Asociación Publicadora Interamericana, 2002, 158 pp.).

Reviewed by Humberto R. Treiyer

The author is the director of the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference and has distinguished himself as an Old Testament scholar, researcher, teacher, and writer. He has the rare gift of expressing complex subject matter in easy-to-understand language. This book is no exception.

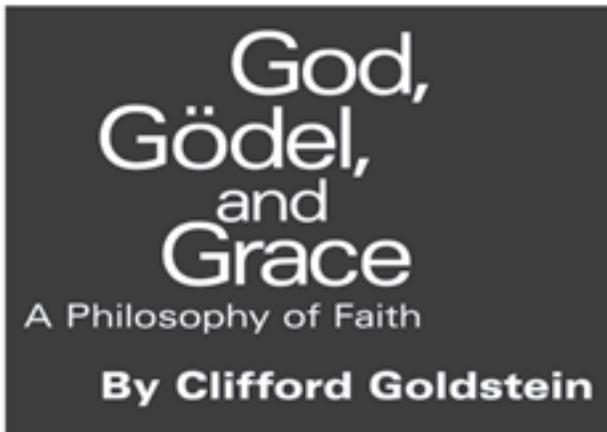
Rodríguez deals with eight eschatological prophecies found in Daniel 2, 7, 8, and 9, Matthew 24 and Revelation 12, 13, and 14. Strangely absent is any reference to Daniel 11 and 12, Gabriel’s explanation of chapters 7 and 8, as well as Revelation 17 and 18. As the author claims to be dealing with the “greatest end-time prophecies in the Bible,” these omissions are painful and rather difficult to understand.

Right at the outset, Rodríguez introduces his book through an excellent summary of the four main characteristics of apocalyptic prophecies, and devotes the first chapter to a concise presentation of the eight basic principles relevant to the interpretation of such prophecies. Chapter two deals with “the ABC of the apocalyptic prophecies,” as they apply to Daniel 2 and 7. Chapter 3 is devoted to two very relevant aspects of Daniel 7, implied but not spelled out in detail in Daniel 2: the Son of Man and the final judgment. Chapter 3 is notable for some revealing original insights, which also characterize Chapter 4 in its analysis and interpretation of Daniel 8.

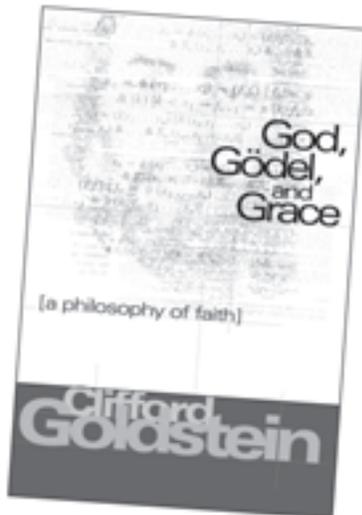
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Chapter 5, on Daniel 9, offers a good sample of the author's skills in systematizing. He takes up the fourfold characterization of Daniel's intercessory prayer and blends it with an analysis of the foretold nine results of the Messiah's work. Chapter 6, on the eschatological Day of Atonement, offers remarkably rewarding reading.

Chapter 7, in dealing with Jesus' eschatological discourse of Matthew 24, could have explored the possibility of relating verse 15 to 14, instead of to verse 16. The Jerusalem temple ceased to be a holy place since Jesus died on the cross, so the "abomination of desolation," still centuries into the future, could hardly be related to the entering of the Roman soldiers inside Jerusalem.

Chapters 8 to 11 deal with Revelation 12-14. The author approaches these difficult chapters in a manner that is scholarly appropriate, homiletically powerful, and experientially relevant. This alone makes the book worth reading and studying. The final chapters reach a theological crescendo, filled with anticipation and joy for the soon-coming climactic event of human history.

Humberto R. Treiyer, Ph.D. is an experienced theologian, now teaching at Universidad Adventista del Plata, Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos, Argentina.

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Geological records and Genesis time frame

I am a Bible-believing Christian interested in geology. As such, I accept the Scriptures as God's inspired and reliable revelation. There are features in the geological structures and in the fossils that provide impressive evidence for catastrophic processes, consistent with what I think could have occurred in a global flood. However, I find it difficult to fit all the geological record within the narrow time-frame provided in the chronology of Genesis 7 and 8. Any help?

My colleagues and I deal with these and other similar questions in the research that we do in geology and paleontology. In my study, I have found a process very helpful in seeking answers. I accept Scripture by faith, since God knows much more than we do about geology. I allow biblical insights to assist me in asking questions that others are generally not asking—to open my mind to see data that others may have missed, and to consider new interpretations that conventional scientific thinking is unlikely to suggest. At the same time, it is important to be involved in the geological scientific community, and even to work with non-creationist scientists, and publish papers in the scientific research literature. This is an important quality-control process that helps us to avoid superficial thinking on both sides. My worldview causes me to notice things that non-creationist scientists are less likely to see, and they see things that I might miss. This process has led me to conclude that a lot of data in the rocks and fossils are difficult to fit with either of two extremes—millions of years on one hand, and a one-year Flood on the other hand.

I now see that Christians have been making one assumption that is not in the Bible—the assumption that there was no geological activity before the Flood (and some think there was also no such activity after the Flood). But the Bible doesn't give us that specific information; it does not tell us how much of the geological record was formed during the Flood. Genesis tells us the biological world began to change after sin (e.g., thorns and thistles), and perhaps geological changes as well began at that time. The Flood was certainly a significant event, but to claim that we know exactly what happened then and that all the rocks were formed during that one year is an extra-biblical theory, and may not be true.

The geological record with its abundant fossils could have formed over a period of several thousand years, before, during, and after the Flood. I believe this theory fits the data best. There are still conflicting data that are troublesome for Bible believers, and other data that are a problem for non-believers. For instance, I don't know the answer for radiometric dating, which is the most difficult line of evidence to explain within a biblical chronology. But a lot of geological data are difficult to reconcile with those multiple millions of years, so for both faith and scientific reasons I predict we will ultimately find there is something wrong with the radiometric time scale.

The interpretation I am suggesting implies that humans were living on the Earth for hundreds of years while the early part of the fossil record was forming. It may be hard to understand how this could be. However, the first part of

the fossil record (Paleozoic) is mostly marine—formed in the ocean. This tells us that humans were living somewhere else at that time, perhaps even on continents that no longer exist. We usually think of our Earth as solid and stable, but the structure of the Earth has completely changed since the first fossils of complex animals were buried, and our current ocean floors did not even exist until after those early marine deposits formed. This reminds me of the description in Ellen White's *Patriarchs and Prophets* (p. 108) of the entire surface of the Earth changing at the Flood, with old mountains disappearing and new mountains forming.

We have much study to do before we will truly understand how to fit together all the evidence into a coherent picture. But I as a Christian and a scientist find a three-step process helpful: trust God's communication to us in Scripture; study carefully and seek to recognize human ideas that we have incorrectly read in between the lines in Scripture; and follow up with careful scientific work. Such a process leads to promising insights and points the way to a realistic synthesis of science and faith. While we continue this study, the most important thing is for each of us to know Jesus as our most trustworthy Friend and our Saviour. This is more important than having all our questions answered right away (although it is hard to be patient!).

Leonard Brand (Ph.D., Cornell University) is professor of biology and paleontology at Loma Linda University in Loma Linda, California, U.S.A. His E-mail address: lbrand@ns.llu.edu

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Index

College and University Dialogue Vols. 11-15 (1999-2003)

By Author

- Aagaard, Earl. "A believer's approach to the sciences," 15:2 (2003), pp. 5-7.
_____. "Demolishing the icons of evolution," 13:3 (2001), pp. 26, 27.
_____. "The moral implications of Darwinism," 11:2 (1999), pp. 5-7.
- Agard, E. Theodore. "What size is your God?," 12:2 (2000), pp. 5, 6, 13.
- Abraham, Dittu. "Kim Gangete," 11:2 (1999), pp. 16, 17.
- Acosta, Abraham. "Dialogue brings two together," 14:1 (2002), pp. 28, 29.
- Alomía, Merling. "The Mainstreaming of New Age (Vasquez)," 12:1 (2000), pp. 31, 33.
_____. "Nueva Era: Los últimos avances (Detrás)," 15:1 (2003), p. 28.
- Altin, Lucio. "Highly Effective Marriage (Van Pelt)," 14:3 (2002), p. 28.
_____. "Ten Who Came Back (Lale and Habada)," 11:3 (1999), p. 28.
- Archer, Austin C. "Life in all its tenses," 11:3 (1999), pp. 24, 25.
- Azevedo, Roberto de. "Ruy Vieira," 15:3 (2003), pp. 22, 23.
- Bacchiocchi, Samuele. "Dance in the Bible," 12:3 (2000), p. 25.
- Badenas, Roberto. "AmiCUS holds second European congress," 15:2 (2003), pp. 32, 33.
_____. "In the name of the law!," 11:1 (1999), pp. 17-19, 28.
_____. "The four Faces of Jesus (McIver)," 15:2 (2003), pp. 26, 27.
- Badger, Denise. "Labeling or loving?," 15:3 (2003), pp. 24, 25.
- Baldwin, John T. "Keepers of the garden: Christians and the environment," 14:1 (2002), pp. 8-11.
- Beach, Bert B. "Adventist styles of worship," 14:1 (2002), pp. 26.
_____. "Ecumenism in the new millennium," 13:2 (2001), pp. 30, 31.
- Becerra, Enrique. "De l'anthropologie à la christologie," 12:2 (2000), pp. 23, 25.
- Bediako, Matthew. "Never forget who you are," 12:3 (2000), p. 3.
- Beeson, Larry. "The Adventist advantage," 11:2 (1999), pp. 8-11.
- Berecz, John M. "Forgiveness: A formula for new beginnings," 12:1 (2000), pp. 5-8.
- Blazen, Ivan T. "The stranger in the road," 15:3 (2003), pp. 26, 27, 31.
- Bolotnikov, Alexander. "From Marx to Christ," 11:3 (1999), pp. 32, 33.
- Borges, Michelson. "Faith on trial," 14:3 (2002), pp. 30, 31.
- Bramstedt, Katrina. "Ethics for scientists: A call for stewardship," 13:3 (2001), pp. 28, 29.
_____. "Using animals in medical research," 15:2 (2003), pp. 24, 25.
- Brand, Leonard. "Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary (Baldwin)," 13:2 (2001), p. 26.
_____. "Faith and science: Can they coexist?," 14:3 (2002), pp. 12-14, 33.
_____. "Geological records and the Genesis time frame," 15:3 (2003), p. 35.
- Bruno, Jorge M. "Para adolescentes y padres (Melgosa)," 11:1 (1999), p. 33.
- Cairus, Aecio E. "Christ is Coming (Gulley)," 12:3 (2000), p. 26.
_____. "Continuity and Change in Adventist Teaching (Pöhler)," 15:1 (2003), pp. 29, 30.
- Camasca, Claudia. "From the convent to the campus," 12:1 (2000), pp. 34, 35.
- Cao, Edmond. "My journey to truth," 11:1 (1999), pp. 34, 35.
- Carbonell, Nancy J. "Self-talk: How to make it work for you," 12:3 (2000), pp. 5, 6, 33.
- Carr, Mark F. "Meatless diet," 14:2 (2002), pp. 8-11, 27.
- Carvajal, Marcelo. "Students work united in Chile," 11:1 (1999), p. 29.
- Chavez, Stephen. "Barry C. Black," 13:2 (2001), pp. 22, 23.
- Clouzet, Roberto. "Leona Glidden Running," 11:3 (1999), pp. 20, 21.
- Cooney, Betty. "Eardell Jenner Rashford," 12:1 (2000), pp. 20, 21.
- Cooper, Lowell C. "Profile of a changing church," 15:1 (2003), pp. 5-8.
- Copiz, Pietro. "Carlos Puyol Buil," 11:3 (1999), pp. 22, 23.
- Cozzi, Corrado. "AmiCUS holds Second European Congress," 15:2 (2003), pp. 32, 33.
- Craig, Winston J. "Vegetarian Nutrition (Sabaté)," 15:2 (2003), p. 26.
- Davidson, Richard M. "Light on the first day of creation," 14:3 (2002), pp. 24, 33.
- De Berg, Kevin. "The God Factor (Ashton)," 14:2 (2002), p. 29.
- De Burgo, Turibio J. "The Christian and Rock Music (Bacchiocchi)," 14:1 (2002), pp. 30, 31.
- De Groot, Mart. "Science and religion: Pursuing a common goal?," 11:3 (1999), pp. 9-12.
- Douglas, Walter. "Christ's attitude toward the poor," 13:2 (2001), pp. 15-17.
- Doukhan, Lilianne. "How shall we worship?," 15:3 (2003), pp. 17-19.
- Doukmetzian, Karnik. "Do we need Adventist lawyers?," 11:3 (1999), pp. 30, 31, 34.
- Drake, Chris. "Berkeley Student Conference focuses on campus ministry," 13:1 (2001), pp. 26, 27.
- Driver, Don. "Why bother praying?," 13:2 (2001), p. 19.
- Du Preez, Ron. "Should we always tell the truth," 13:2 (2001), pp. 5-7, 25.
- Dudley, Roger and Peggy. "How to talk to someone you love," 14:3 (2002), pp. 5-8.
- Duerksen Dick. "Manuel Escorcio," 11:1 (1999), pp. 22, 23.
- Duncan, Pamela. "Adventist Frontier Missions," 13:1 (2003), pp. 32, 33.
- Dyjack, Angela Bennett. "Health hazards of the environment," 12:3 (2000), pp. 14-16.
- Dyjack, David. "Health hazards of the environment," 12:3 (2000), pp. 14-16.
_____. "The Perils of Progress (Ashton and Laura)," 11:1 (1999), p. 32.
- Editors. "The story of the Adventist Church on postal stamps," 13:2 (2001), p. 18.
- Ekkens, David. "Origins: Linking Science and Scripture (Roth)," 11:2 (1999), p. 30.
- Escobar Suárez, Edgar. "La perfección cristiana (Zurcher)," 13:3 (2001), pp. 30, 31.
- Espinosa, Enrique. "Our Awesome God: A Refresher Course (Bruinsma)," 14:3 (2002), p. 29.
- Eva, Willmore. "What is truth?," 15:2 (2003), pp. 22, 23.
- Evans, Dona J. "Shattered dreams and bright hope," 11:2 (1999), pp. 26, 27.
- Faria, Ricardo Dos Santos. "Helping the community in the Amazon basin," 14:2 (2002), p. 34.
- Fayard, Carlos. "Beyond Shame and Pain (Berecz)," 12:1 (2000), pp. 20, 31.
- Feldbush, Martin. "On being a true friend," 11:1 (1999), pp. 26-28.
- Ferch-Johnson, Carole. "Living with certainty in times of trouble," 13:2 (2001).
- Forbes, Daniel M. "Campus ministry: How your church can be involved," 12:1 (2000), pp. 32, 33.
- Fowler, John M. "Almost Home," 12:2 (2000), p. 3.
_____. "Between thinkable and unthinkable," 15:1 (2003), p. 3, 4.
_____. "September 11, 2001 and three other days," (13:3 (2001), p. 3.
_____. "Should we ever judge others?," 11:2 (1999), p. 28.
_____. "The millennium that matters," 11:3 (1999), p. 3.
- Francis, Joan. "Sabbath Roots (Bradford)," 13:2 (2001), pp. 26, 27.
_____. "Seeker After Light (Edwards and Land)," 15:1 (2003), pp. 30, 31.
- Frikart, Ulrich. "Experience the power of God's Word," 11:1 (1999), pp. 24, 25.
- Gallagher, Jonathan. "Barbara Reynolds," 14:1 (2002), pp. 20, 21, 34.
_____. "Ben Carson," 15:1 (2003), pp. 24, 25, 31.
- Galusha, Joe. "In six days (Ashton)," 13:1 (2001), pp. 28, 29.
- Gane, Roy. "Caleb's finest hour," 13:3 (2001), pp. 24, 25.
- García, Ada. "Juventud enamorada (Valenzuela)," 12:3 (2000), pp. 26.
- García-Marenko, Alfredo. "At peace: *Iacta alea est*," 14:3 (2002), p. 3.
_____. "Needed: Leaders of courage," 11:2 (1999), p. 3.
_____. "Youth Department for more active campus ministries," 14:2 (2002), pp. 24, 27.
- Gashugi, Leonard K. "Not everything for sale: A biblical perspective on economics," 12:1 (2000), pp. 16-19.
- Gelabert, Francesc X. "First European Congress of Adventist University Students," 12:2 (2000), p. 30.
- General Conference. "Adventist world leaders adopt public campus ministry policies," 15:2 (2003), pp. 28, 29.
_____. "An Adventist statement on family violence," 14:1 (2002), pp. 32, 33.
_____. "Birth control: An Adventist statement," 12:2 (2000), pp. 32, 33.
- Goldstein, Clifford. "Israel and the Church (Doukhan)," 14:3 (2002), pp. 28, 29.
_____. "Life: A chemical dilemma?," 13:3 (2001), pp. 5-8.
- Gonçalves, Otmar. "Maranhão Mission in Brazil holds three seminars," 13:3 (2001), p. 33.
_____. "Seminar for university students in Maranhão, Brazil," 11:2 (1999), p. 29.
- Graz, John. "Adventists and human dignity," 15:1 (2003), pp. 19-21.
_____. "Religious Liberty World Report 2000," 12:3 (2000), pp. 30, 31.
- Greenleaf, Floyd. "Messenger of the Lord (Douglass)," 11:3 (1999), p. 27.
_____. "Teaching History (Land)," 13:1 (2001), p. 28.
- Grimsley, Steve. "Where is God when life hurts?," 14:3 (2002), pp. 22, 23.
- Gustin, Pat. "The 10/40 Window: New mission opportunities," 12:2 (2000), pp. 14-17.
- Guzmán García, Carlos. "Romance across the Caribbean," 11:2 (1999), p. 29.
- Hammerly, Hector. "Ten reasons why I believe in God," 11:1 (1999), p. 30, 31.
- Hancock, Marty. "Intelligent design: The biochemical challenge to Darwinian evolution?," 15:2 (2003), pp. 11-14.
- Handysides, Allan. "HIV/AIDS: What you should know," 15:1 (2003), pp. 16-18.
- Henning, Volker. "Media Values: Christian Perspectives on the Mass Media (Reynaud)," 12:2 (2000), p. 22.
- Huaco Palomino, Marco Antonio. "Adventists at Peru's oldest university," 12:3 (2000), p. 24.
_____. "My journey to faith," 12:2 (2000), pp. 34, 35.
- International Religious Liberty Association. "Responsible Proselytism: An Inter-religious Statement," 14:3 (2002), pp. 26, 27.
- Javor, George T. "Creationism: Still valid in the new millennium?," 15:3 (2003), pp. 10-12, 30.
_____. "The mystery of life," 14:1 (2002), pp. 12-16.
- Jerus, Joe. "Free at last!," 13:3 (2001), pp. 34, 35.
- Jones, Dustin. "Water is good for your heart!," 14:3 (2002), pp. 25, 27.
- Kennedy, Elaine. "Data and interpretation: Knowing the difference," 13:3 (2001), pp. 15-19.
- Kerbs, Raúl. "Ethics in postmodernism," 14:2 (2002), pp. 15-17, 33.
- Kibuuka, Hudson. "Special graduation for Adventists in Botswana," 15:2 (2003), p. 32.
_____. "Students and teachers build church in Uganda," 14:2 (2002), p. 35.
- King, Jolena Taylor. "Jack, an incredible life," 11:2 (1999), pp. 34, 35, 23.
- Klingbeil, Chantal J. "Mixed marriages among Adventists," 14:2 (2002), pp. 12-14, 23.

- Klingbeil, Gerald A. "The stones still cry out!" 14:1 (2002), pp. 17-19, 34.
- Koenig, Will. "Shine, baby, shine," 15:3 (2003), p. 29.
- Koh, Linda Mei-Lin. "Gloria Diokno," 13:2 (2001), pp. 20, 21.
- Koranteng-Pipim, Samuel. "The work that must be done!" 14:1 (2002), pp. 27, 28.
- Krause, Gary. "Floyd Murdoch," 14:2 (2002), pp. 18, 19.
- _____. "Phil McKay," 15:2 (2003), pp. 18, 19.
- Kuntaraf, Kathleen H. Liwidjaja, "Healthy choices and living options," 12:1 (2000), pp. 13-15, 19.
- Lee, Kyu Bong. "The riddle of migratory birds," 13:2 (2001), pp. 8-11.
- Luchian, Cezar. "The road to Jesus," 13:1 (2001), pp. 34, 35.
- Lyakhov, Victor. "Tolstoy and the Bible: A complex relationship," 13:1 (2001).
- Maran, Kimberly Luste. "Mary Grace Gallekanao," 15:1 (2003), pp. 22, 23.
- _____. "Michael Comberiate," 13:3 (2001), pp. 22, 23.
- Marshall, David. "He is risen indeed!" 15:3 (2003), pp. 13-16.
- Mastrapa, Selma Chaij. "Smart Love (Van Pelt)," 11:1 (1999), p. 32.
- _____. "Understanding Intimate Violence (Couden)," 12:3 (2000), p. 27.
- Mathema, Zacchaeus A. "The Sabbath Under Crossfire (Bacchiocchi)," 12:2 (2000), p. 23.
- Matschek, Hans. "Alois Kinder," 12:1 (2001), pp. 22, 23.
- McClarty, Wilma. "A Thousand May Fall (Mundy)," 15:2 (2003), pp. 27, 29.
- _____. "Behind the Seen: God's Hand in Esther's Life... and Yours (Lichtenwalter)," 14:2 (2002), p. 30.
- McIver, Robert K. "The four faces of Jesus," 14:3 (2002), pp. 9-11.
- Merling, David. "The search for Noah's ark," 11:3 (1999), pp. 5-8.
- M'Masi, Dan. "Kenyatta University: Once again a first in Kenya," 15:1 (2003), 35.
- Montgomery, Vikki. "Gwendolyn Winston Foster," 13:3 (2001), pp. 20, 21.
- Morales-Gudmundsson, Lourdes. "José (Rojas)," 13:2 (2001), p. 28.
- Moyer, Bruce Campbell. "No reserve! No retreat! No regret!" 14:1 (2002), pp. 24, 25.
- Mwasinga, Christopher. "East Tanzania Field university students hold a retreat," 13:3 (2001), p. 33.
- Nahman, Alf. "Searching for my roots, I found the Messiah," 12:3 (2000), pp. 34, 35.
- Namm, Judy. "Campus ministry: Are you ready to start one?," 15:2 (2003), pp. 30, 33.
- Nelson, Dwight. "Through grief and beyond," 14:1 (2002), pp. 5-7, 16.
- Neumann, Brian. "Pilgrimage from rock," 12:3 (2000), pp. 28, 29.
- Nickel, Nathan. "Out of Mongolia, a transforming experience," 15:2 (2003), pp. 34, 35.
- Núñez, Miguel Angel. "La posmodernidad (Pereyra y Espinosa)," 15:1 (2003), pp. 28, 29.
- _____. "When two become one: The mathematics of marriage," 11:1 (1999), pp. 10-12.
- Nwaomah, E. N. "Nigerian students hold largest convention," 14:3 (2002), pp. 34, 35.
- Ogembo, Herbert. "African students meet in India," 14:2 (2002), p. 35.
- Osborn, Ron. "Against silence: A meditation on Kosova," 12:2 (2000), pp. 28, 29, 31.
- Osterman, Stacy. "General Youth Conference makes history," 15:3 (2003), pp. 28.
- Panayotov, Ventsislav. "Adventist students hold first meeting in Bulgaria," 14:3 (2002), p. 35.
- Parmenter, Vernon B. "Adventist Volunteer Service," 13:2 (2001), p. 29.
- Paulsen, Jan. "Three laws of spirituality," 12:2 (2000), pp. 20, 21.
- Peabody, Michael. "Ebenezer Chambi," 13:1 (2001), pp. 22, 23.
- _____. "Kay Kuzma," 11:1 (1999), pp. 20, 21.
- Pendleton, David A. "Facing sin," 12:1 (2001), pp. 24, 25.
- Pereyra, Mario. "From homo sapiens to homo videns," 11:3 (1999), pp. 13-15, 19.
- Peters, Percy. "Phetsile Kholekile Dlamini," 13:1 (2001), pp. 20, 21.
- Poehler, Rolf J. "Lutherans and Adventists in Conversation," 13:3 (2001), p. 31.
- Ranzolin, Leo. "Jesus leads His church," 15:2 (2003), p. 3.
- _____. "Living on a higher plane," 13:1 (2001), p. 3.
- Rasi, Humberto M. "Developing an attitude of gratitude," 13:2 (2001), p. 3.
- _____. "Faith, reason, and the educated Christian," 15:3 (2003), pp. 5-9, 16.
- _____. "Heber Pintos," 11:2 (1999), pp. 18, 19.
- _____. "Marilyn Saavedra," 12:3 (2000), pp. 18, 19.
- _____. "Nery Cruz," 12:2 (2000), pp. 18, 19.
- _____. "The first 15 years," 15:3 (2003), p. 3.
- _____. "Your survival kit for the next century," 12:1 (2000), p. 3.
- Rasi, Julieta. "A healthy resolution," 11:1 (1999), p. 3.
- Reid, George W. "God, Gödel and Grace (Goldstein)," 15:3 (2003), p. 32.
- _____. "The year 2000: Will it usher in the millennium?," 11:2 (1999), pp. 12-15.
- Reid, G. Edward. "The voice of conscience," 12:3 (2000) pp. 22, 23.
- Reynaud, Daniel. "How to choose what we watch," 14:3 (2002), pp. 15-17.
- _____. "Television and violence: A Christian response to the debate over effects," 12:1 (2000), pp. 25-29.
- Rice, Richard. "Can we make sense of suffering?," 12:2 (2000), pp. 10-13.
- Riveros, Mario. "101 Questions Adventists Ask (Beach and Graz)," 13:2 (2001), 27.
- Rizzo, Horacio. "University students meet in Argentina," 15:3 (2003), p. 30.
- Rode, Daniel Julio. "Why do some churches grow and others don't?," 13:1 (2001), pp. 12-14, 35.
- Rojas, José Vicente. "Dreamers and visionaries," 14:2 (2002), p. 3.
- Rojas, Omar. "Witnessing for Christ through music," 13:2 (2001), p. 35.
- Ross, Gary. "Adventism and the American Republic (Morgan)," 14:1 (2002), p. 30.
- Roth, Ariel A. "Chance or design? The long search for an evolutionary mechanism," 12:1 (2000), pp. 9-12, 29.
- _____. "Genesis and the geologic column," 15:1 (2003), pp. 9-12, 18.
- Ryan, Heidi. "Serving while we can, where we are," 14:1 (2002), p. 35.
- Rydzewski, Ella. "Marilyn Fargo," 15:3 (2003), pp. 20, 21, 31.
- Schwantes, Siegfried J. "God and history: A biblical perspective," 11:1 (1999), pp. 13-16.
- Sequeira, Jean. "Who was Mary?," 11:3 (1999), pp. 16-19.
- Shields, Bonita. "The five excuses of Moses," 13:1 (2001), pp. 24, 25.
- Sorajjakool, Siroj. "Listening to sadness," 13:3 (2001), pp. 9-11.
- Stammler, Wolfgang. "That's what Jesus did for me!," 15:1 (2003), pp. 26, 27.
- Staples, Russell. "Adventists in the 21st century," 13:1 (2001), pp. 5-7.
- Steed, Lincoln. "Francisco de Araujo," 14:1 (2002), pp. 22, 23.
- _____. "Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse," 14:3 (2002), pp. 18, 19.
- Steger, Carlos A. "Más allá de la ley (Badenas)," 12:2 (2000), pp. 22, 23.
- Steger, Carlos F. "Fossils: The story they tell us," 13:1 (2001), pp. 8-11, 33.
- Stenbakken, Richard. "Kedging the future," 14:1 (2002), p. 3.
- Stovall, Audrey. "James Graves," 14:3 (2002), pp. 18, 19, 21.
- Sutton, Will. "God, me, and the marketplace of ideas," 11:2 (1999), pp. 24, 25, 27.
- Swanson, Gary B. "Foundations," 14:2 (2002), pp. 22, 23.
- Takatohi, Urias Echterhoff. "The search for extraterrestrial intelligence," 14:2 (2002), pp. 5-7.
- Thompson, Steve. "Why so many Bible versions?," 11:3 (1999), p. 26.
- Timm, Alberto R. "How reliable is the Bible?," 13:3 (2001), pp. 12-14.
- _____. "The Voice of the Spirit (Viera)," 11:1 (1999), p. 33.
- _____. "They Had a World to Win (Chilson)," 15:1 (2003), p. 31.
- Torres, Pedro. "Advance in Cuba," 13:2 (2001), p. 34.
- _____. "Adventist musicians in Cuba," 14:2 (2002), p. 34.
- Treyer, Humberto. "Fulguros de esperanza (Rodriguez)," 15:3 (2003), p. 33, 34.
- Valentine, Gilbert M. "Siriporn Tantipoonwinai," 15:2 (2003), pp. 20, 21, 29.
- Van Pelt, Nancy L. "After the wedding comes a marriage," 12:2 (2000), pp. 7-9, 17.
- _____. "Dating: Preparing for a successful marriage," 11:2 (1999), pp. 21-23.
- _____. "Straight talk about sexual purity," 13:2 (2001), pp. 12-14, 25.
- _____. "Waiting for sex," 15:1 (2003), pp. 13-15.
- Veith, Walter. "My difficult journey," 15:1 (2003), pp. 32, 33.
- Veloso, Josemaria. "Dialogue leads to baptism and marriage," 12:2 (2000), p. 30.
- _____. "University students in Bahia, Brazil," 12:2 (2000), p. 31.
- Venn, Ernesto Douglas. "Sharing Christ on campus," 15:1 (2003), p. 34.
- Vicuña, Máximo. "Apocalipsis y el fin del mundo (Veloso)," 11:3 (1999), p. 29.
- Vogel, Winfried. "Secrets of Daniel (Doukhan)," 13:3 (2001), pp. 31, 32.
- Vyhmeister, Nancy. "Altar Call (Gane)," 13:1 (2001), p. 29.
- _____. "Daughters of God (White)," 11:3 (1999), pp. 28, 29.
- _____. "The Ellen White Series (Knight)," 14:2 (2002), pp. 28, 29.
- _____. "Truth Left Behind (Wohlberg)," 15:3 (2003), pp. 32, 33.
- Yorke, Gosnell L. O. R. "Community of Faith (Staples)," 14:1 (2002), p. 31.
- Young, Norman H. "Can we believe in miracles?," 13:1 (2001), p. 19.
- Wade, Eloy. "Comentario del Evangelio de Juan (Veloso)," 12:1 (2000), p. 31.
- _____. "Jewelry in the Bible (Rodriguez)," 13:3 (2001), p. 30.
- Wahlen, Gina. "From Marx to Christ," 11:3 (1999), pp. 32, 33.
- Ward, Ewan. "Intelligent design: The biochemical challenge to Darwinian evolution?," 15:2 (2003), pp. 11-14.
- Watts, Dorothy. "Kim Gangte," 11:2 (1999), pp. 16, 17.
- Watts, Ralph S. "Vietnam: 25 years later," 13:1 (2003), pp. 31, 32.
- Weismeyer, Richard. "Joan Coggin," 12:2 (2000), pp. 20, 21.
- White, Raven. "Praise and worship at Howard University," 12:3 (2000), p. 24.
- Williams, DeWitt S. "The friendship factor," 15:2 (2003), pp. 15-17.
- Wilson, Kenneth. "Ride to Glory (Johns)," 13:1 (2001), pp. 29, 33.
- Winslow, Gerald R. "In our own image? Ethics and human cloning," 11:1 (1999), pp. 5-9.
- _____. "Meatless diet," 14:2 (2002), pp. 8-11, 27.
- Wohlberg, Steve. "Is Left Behind biblical?," 15:2 (2003), pp. 8-10.
- Wong, Mary. "Jack: An Incredible Life (King)," 11:2 (1999), p. 31.
- _____. "Maria Lee," 14:2 (2002), pp. 20, 21.
- _____. "Yoshinori Namihira," 12:3 (2000), pp. 20, 21.
- Wong, Robert. "The hidden Bible," 14:3 (2002), pp. 32, 33.
- Zaitsev, Eugene V. "True Believer (Bolotnikov and Wahlen)," 11:2 (1999), pp. 30, 31.
- Zhigankov, Oleg. "Ahead of their time? The 15th century Reformation in Russia," 12:3 (2000), pp. 10-13.

_____. "Desperate escape (Ponomarov)," 12:3 (2000), pp. 27, 31.

Zinke, Edward E. "God on Trial?," 14:2 (2002), pp. 31-33.

Zuccarelli, Anthony J. "In our own image? Ethics and human cloning," 11:1 (1999), pp. 5-9.

Zuill, Henry. "Ecology, biodiversity, and creation: A view from the top," 12:3 (2000), pp. 7-9, 32.

Zvandasara, Nkosiyabo. "Adventist Mission in the 21st Century (Dybdahl)," 12:1 (2001), p. 30.

Action Report

"Adventist musicians in Cuba," by Pedro Torres Satuy, 14:2 (2002), p. 34.

"Adventist students hold first meeting in Bulgaria," by Ventsislav Panayotov, 14:3 (2002), p. 35.

"Adventists at Perú's oldest university," by Marco Antonio Huaco Palomino, 12:3 (2000), p. 24.

"African students meet in India," by Herbert Ogembo, 14:2 (2002), p. 35.

"AMiCUS holds second European congress," by Roberto Badenas and Corrado Cozzi, 15:2 (2003), pp. 32, 33.

"Berkeley Student Conference focuses on campus ministry," by Chris Drake, 13:1 (2001), pp. 26, 27.

"Dialogue brings two together," by Abraham Acosta, 14:1 (2002), pp. 28, 29.

"Dialogue leads to baptism and marriage," by Josemara Veloso, 12:2 (2000), p. 30.

"East Tanzania Field university students hold a retreat," by Christopher Mwasinga, 13:3 (2001), p. 33.

"First European congress of Adventist university students," by Frances X. Gelabert, 12:2 (2000), p. 30.

"General Youth Conference makes history," by Stacy Osterman, 15:3 (2003), p. 28.

"Helping the community in the Amazon basin," by Ricardo Dos Santos Faría, 14:2 (2002), p. 34.

"Kenyatta University: Once again a first in Kenya," by Dan M'Masi, 15:1 (2003), p. 35.

"Maranhão Mission in Brazil holds three seminars," by Otimar Gonçalves, 13:3 (2001), p. 33.

"Nigerian students hold largest convention," 14:3 (2002), by E. N. Nwaomah, pp. 34, 35.

"Praise and worship at Howard University," by Raven White, 12:3 (2000), p. 24.

"Romance across the Caribbean," Carlos Guzmán García, 11:2 (1999), p. 29.

"Seminar for university students in Maranhão, Brazil," by Otimar Gonçalves, 11:2 (1999), p. 29.

"Sharing Christ on campus," by Ernesto Douglas Venn, 15:1 (2003), p. 34.

"Special graduation for Adventists in Botswana," by Hudson Kibuuka, 15:2 (2003), p. 32.

"Students and teachers build church in Uganda," by Hudson Kibuuka, 14:2 (2002), p. 35.

"Students work united in Chile," by Marcelo Carvajal, 11:1 (1999), p. 29.

"The work that must be done!," by Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, 14:1 (2002), pp. 27, 28.

"University students in Bahia, Brazil," by Josemara Veloso, 12:2 (2000), p. 30.

"Witnessing for Christ through music," by Omar Rojas, 13:2 (2001), p. 35.

Books

"101 Questions Adventists Ask (Beach and Graz)," by Mario Riveros, 13:2 (2001), p. 27.

"A Thousand May Fall (Mundy)," by Wilma McClarty, 15:2 (2003), pp. 27, 29.

"Adventism and the American Republic (Morgan)," by Gary Ross, 14:1 (2002), p. 30.

"Adventist Mission in the 21st Century (Dybdahl)," by Nkosiyabo Zvandasara, 12:1 (2001).

"Altar Call (Gane)," by Nancy Vyhmeister, 13:1 (2001), p. 29.

"Apocalipsis y el fin del mundo (Veloso)," by Máximo Vicuña, 11:3 (1999), p. 29.

"Behind the Seen: God's Hand in Esther's Life... and Yours (Lichtenwalter)," by Wilma McClarty, 14:2 (2002), p. 30.

"Beyond Shame and Pain (Berecz)," by Carlos Fayard, 12:1 (2000), pp. 20, 31.

"Christ is Coming (Gulley)," by Aecio Cairus, 12:3 (2000), p. 26.

"Comentario del Evangelio de Juan (Veloso)," by Eloy Wade, 12:1 (2000), p. 31.

"Community of Faith (Staples)," by Gosnell L. O. R. Yorke, 14:1 (2002), p. 31.

"Continuity and Change in Adventist Teaching (Pöhler)," by Aecio Cairus, 15:1 (2003), pp. 29, 30.

"Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary (Baldwin)," by Leonard Brand, 13:2 (2001), p. 26.

"Daughters of God (White)," by Nancy Vyhmeister, 11:3 (1999), pp. 28, 29.

"De l'anthropologie à la christologie," by Enrique Becerra, 12:2 (2000), pp. 23, 25.

"Desperate Escape (Ponomarov)," by Oleg Zhigankov, 12:3 (2000), pp. 27, 31.

"Fulgores de esperanza (Rodríguez)," by Humberto Treiyer, 15:3 (2003), p. 33, 34.

"God, Gödel and Grace (Goldstein)," by George W. Reid, 15:3 (2003), p. 32.

"Highly Effective Marriage (Van Pelt)," by Lucio Altin, 14:3 (2002), p. 28.

"In six days (Ashton)," by Joe Galusha, 13:1 (2001), pp. 28, 29.

"Israel and the Church (Doukhan)," by Clifford Goldstein, 14:3 (2002), pp. 28, 29.

"Jack: An Incredible Life (King)," by Mary Wong, 11:2 (1999), p. 31.

"Jewelry in the Bible (Rodríguez)," by Eloy Wade, 13:3 (2001), p. 30.

"José (Rojas)," by Lourdes Morales-Gudmundsson, 13:2 (2001), p. 28.

"Juventud enamorada (Valenzuela)," by Ada García, 12:3 (2000), p. 26.

"La perfección cristiana (Zurcher)," by Edgar Escobar Suárez, 13:3 (2001), pp. 30, 31.

"Lutherans and Adventists in Conversation," by Rolf J. Poehler, 13:3 (2001), p. 31.

"Más allá de la ley (Badenas)," by Carlos A. Steger, 12:2 (2000), pp. 22, 23.

"Media Values: Christian Perspectives on the Mass Media (Reynaud)," by Volker Henning, 12:2 (2000), p. 22.

"Messenger of the Lord (Douglass)," by Floyd Greenleaf, 11:3 (1999), p. 27.

"Origins: Linking Science and Scripture, (Roth)" by David Ekkens, 11:2 (1999), p. 30.

"Our Awesome God: A Refresher Course, (Bruinsma)" by Enrique Espinosa, 14:3 (2002), p. 29.

"Para adolescentes y padres (Melgosa)," by Jorge M. Bruno, 11:1 (1999), p. 33.

"Ride to Glory (Johns)," by Kenneth Wilson, 13:1 (2001), pp. 29, 33.

"Sabbath Roots (Bradford)," by Joan Francis, 13:2 (2001), pp. 26, 27.

"Secrets of Daniel (Doukhan)," by Winfried Vogel, 13:3 (2001), pp. 31, 32.

"Smart Love (Van Pelt)," by Selma Chaij Mastrapa, 11:1 (1999), p. 32.

"Teaching History (Land)," by Floyd Greenleaf, 13:1 (2001), p. 28.

"Ten Who Came Back (Lale and Habada)," by Lucio Altin, 11:3 (1999), p. 28.

"The Christian and Rock Music (Bacchiocchi)," by Turibio J. de Burgo, 14:1 (2002), pp. 30, 31.

"The Ellen White Series (Knight)," by Nancy Vyhmeister, 14:2 (2002), pp. 28, 29.

"The four Faces of Jesus (McIver)," by Roberto Badenas, 15:2 (2003), pp. 26, 27.

"The God Factor (Ashton)," by Kevin De Berg, 14:2 (2002), p. 29.

"The Mainstreaming of New Age (Vasquez)," by Merling Alomia, 12:1 (2000), pp. 31, 33.

"The Perils of Progress (Ashton and Laura)," by David Dyjack, 11:1 (1999), p. 32.

"The Sabbath Under Crossfire (Bacchiocchi)," by Zacchaeus A. Mathema, 12:2 (2000), p. 23.

"The Voice of the Spirit (Viera)," by Alberto Timm, 11:1 (1999), p. 33.

"True Believer (Bolotnikov and Wahlen)," by Eugene V. Zaitsev, 11:2 (1999), pp. 30, 31.

"Truth Left Behind (Wohlberg)," by Nancy Vyhmeister, 15:3 (2003), pp. 32, 33.

"Understanding Intimate Violence (Couden)," by Selma Chaij Mastrapa, 12:3 (2000), p. 27.

"Vegetarian Nutrition (Sabaté)," by Winston J. Craig, 15:2 (2003), p. 26.

Campus Life

"Campus ministry: Are you ready to start one?," by Judy Namm, 15:2 (2003), pp. 30, 33.

"Campus ministry: How your church can be involved," by Daniel M. Forbes, 12:1 (2000), pp. 32, 33.

"Faith on trial," by Michelson Borges, 14:3 (2002), pp. 30, 31.

"God, me, and the marketplace of ideas," by Will Sutton, 11:2 (1999), pp. 24, 25, 27.

"On being a true friend," by Martin Feldbush, 11:1 (1999), pp. 26-28.

Essays

"A believer's approach to the sciences," by Earl Aagaard, 15:2 (2003), pp. 5-7.

"Adventists in the 21st century," by Russell Staples, 13:1 (2001), pp. 5-7.

"After the wedding comes a marriage," by Nancy Van Pelt, 12:2 (2000), pp. 7-9, 17.

"Ahead of their time? The 15th century Reformation in Russia," by Oleg Zhigankov, 12:3 (2000), pp. 10-13.

"Can we make sense of suffering?," by Richard Rice, 12:2 (2000), pp. 10-13.

"Chance or design? The long search for an evolutionary mechanism," by Ariel A. Roth, 12:1 (2000), pp. 9-12, 29.

"Christ's attitude toward the poor," by Walter Douglas, 13:2 (2001), pp. 15-17.

"Creationism: Still valid in the new millennium?," by George T. Javor, 15:3 (2003), pp. 10-12, 30.

"Data and interpretation: Knowing the difference," by Elaine Kennedy, 13:3 (2001), pp. 15-19.

"Dating: Preparing for a successful marriage," by Nancy L. Van Pelt, 11:2 (1999), pp. 21-23.

"Ecology, biodiversity, and creation: A view from the top," by Henry Zuill, 12:3 (2000), pp. 7-9, 32.

"Ethics in postmodernism," by Raúl Kerbs, 14:2 (2002), pp. 15-17, 33.

"Faith and science: Can they coexist?," by Leonard Brand, 14:3 (2002), pp. 12-14, 33.

"Faith, reason, and the educated Christian," by Humberto M. Rasi, 15:3 (2003), pp. 5-9, 16.

"Forgiveness: A formula for new beginnings," by John M. Berecz, 12:1 (2000), pp. 5-8.

"Fossils: The story they tell us," by Carlos F. Steger, 13:1 (2001), pp. 8-11, 33.

"From homo sapiens to homo videns," by Mario Pereyra, 11:3 (1999), pp. 13-15, 19.

"Genesis and the geologic column," by Ariel A. Roth, 15:1 (2003), pp. 9-12, 18.

"God and history: A biblical perspective," by Siegfried J. Schwantes, 11:1 (1999) pp. 13-16.

"He is risen indeed!," by David Marshall, 15:3 (2003), pp. 13-16.

"Health hazards of the environment," by David Dyjack and Angela Bennett Dyjack, 12:3 (2000), pp. 14-16.

"Healthy choices and living options," by Kathleen H. Liwidjaja-Kuntaraf, 12:1 (2000), pp. 13-15, 19.

"HIV/AIDS: What you should know," by Allan Handysides, 15:1 (2003), pp. 16-18.

"How reliable is the Bible?," by Alberto Timm, 13:3 (2001), pp. 12-14.

"How shall we worship?," by Lillianne Doukhan, 15:3 (2003), pp. 17-19.

"How to choose what we watch," by Daniel Reynaud, 14:3 (2002), pp. 15-17.

"How to talk to someone you love," by Roger and Peggy Dudley, 14:3 (2002), pp. 5-8.

"In our own image? Ethics and human cloning," by Anthony J. Zuccarelli and Gerald R. Winslow, 11:1 (1999), pp. 5-9.

"In the name of the law!," by Roberto Badenas, 11:1 (1999), pp. 17-19, 28.

"Intelligent design: The biochemical challenge to Darwinian evolution?," by Ewan Ward and Marty Hancock, 15:2 (2003), pp. 11-14.

"Is Left Behind biblical?," by Steve Wohlberg, 15:2 (2003), pp. 8-10.

- "Keepers of the garden: Christians and the environment," by John T. Baldwin, 14:1 (2002), pp. 8-11.
- "Life: A chemical dilemma?," 13:3 (2003), by Clifford Goldstein, 13:3 (2001), pp. 5-8.
- "Listening to sadness," by Siroj Sorajjakool, 13:3 (2001), pp. 9-11.
- "Meatless diet," by Mark F. Carr and Gerald R. Winslow, 14:2 (2002), pp. 8-11, 27.
- "Mixed marriages among Adventists," by Chantal J. Klingbeil, 14:2 (2002), pp. 12-14, 23.
- "Not everything for sale: A biblical perspective on economics," by Leonard K. Gashugi, 12:1 (2000), pp. 16-19.
- "Profile of a changing church," by Lowell C. Cooper, 15:1 (2003), pp. 5-8.
- "Science and religion: Pursuing a common goal?," by Mart De Groot, 11:3 (1999), pp. 9-12.
- "Self-talk: How to make it work for you," by Nancy J. Carbonell, 12:3 (2000), pp. 5, 6, 33.
- "Should we always tell the truth?," by Ron du Preez, 13:2 (2001), pp. 5-7, 25.
- "Straight talk about sexual purity," by Nancy L. Van Pelt, 13:2 (2001), pp. 12-14, 25.
- "The 10/40 Window: New mission opportunities," by Pat Gustin, 2:2 (2000), pp. 14-17.
- "The Adventist advantage," by Larry Beeson, 11:2 (1999), pp. 8-11.
- "The four faces of Jesus," by Robert K. McIver, 14:3 (2002), pp. 9-11.
- "The friendship factor," by DeWitt S. Williams, 15:2 (2003), pp. 15-17.
- "The mystery of life," by George T. Javor, 14:1 (2002), pp. 12-16.
- "The moral implications of Darwinism," by Earl Aagaard, 11:2 (1999), pp. 5-7.
- "The riddle of migratory birds," by Kyu Bong Lee, 13:2 (2001), pp. 8-11.
- "The search for extraterrestrial intelligence," by Urias Echterhoff Takatohi, 14:2 (2002), pp. 5-7.
- "The search for Noah's ark," by David Merling, 11:3 (1999), pp. 5-8.
- "The stones still cry out!," by Gerald A. Klingbeil, 14:1 (2002), pp. 17-19, 34.
- "The story of the Adventist Church on postal stamps," by the Editors, 13:2 (2001), p. 18.
- "The year 2000: Will it usher in the millennium?," by George W. Reid, 11:2 (1999), pp. 12-15.
- "Through grief and beyond," by Dwight Nelson, 14:1 (2002), pp. 5-7, 16.
- "Tolstoy and the Bible: A complex relationship," by Victor Lyakhov, 13:1 (2001), pp. 15-18.
- "Waiting for sex," by Nancy L. Van Pelt, 15:1 (2003), pp. 13-15.
- "What size is your God?," by E. Theodore Agard, 12:2 (2000), pp. 5, 6, 13.
- "When two become one: The mathematics of marriage," by Miguel Angel Nuñez, 11:1 (1999), pp. 10-12.
- "Who was Mary?," by Jean Sequeira, 11:3 (1999), pp. 16-19.
- "Why do some churches grow and others don't?," by Daniel Julio Rode, 13:1 (2001), pp. 12-14, 35.
- First Person**
- "Free at last!," by Joe Jerus, 13:3 (2001), pp. 34, 35.
- "From Marx to Christ," by Alexander Bolotnikov and Gina Wahlen, 11:3 (1999), pp. 32, 33.
- "From the convent to the campus," by Claudia Camasca, 12:1 (2000), pp. 34, 35.
- "Jack, an incredible life," by Jolena Taylor King, 11:2 (1999), pp. 34, 35, 23.
- "My difficult journey," by Walter Veith, 15:1 (2003), pp. 32, 33.
- "My journey to faith," by Marco Antonio Huaco Palomino, 12:2 (2000), pp. 34, 35.
- "My journey to truth," by Edmond Cao, 11:1 (1999), pp. 34, 35.
- "Out of Mongolia, a transforming experience," by Nathan Nickel, 15:2 (2003), pp. 34, 35.
- "Searching for my roots, I found the Messiah," by Alf Nahman, 12:3 (2000), pp. 34, 35.
- "Serving while we can, where we are," by Heidi Ryan, 14:1 (2002), p. 35.
- "The hidden Bible," by Robert Wong, 14:3 (2002), pp. 32, 33.
- "The road to Jesus," by Cezar Luchian, 13:1 (2001), pp. 34, 35.
- "The stranger in the road," by Ivan T. Blazen, 15:3 (2003), pp. 26, 27, 31.
- For Your Information**
- "Adventist Frontier Missions," by Pamela Duncan, 13:1 (2001), pp. 32, 33.
- "Adventist Volunteer Service," by Vernon B. Parmenter, 13:2 (2001), p. 29.
- "Adventist world leaders adopt public campus ministry policies," by the General Conference, 15:2 (2003), pp. 28, 29.
- "An Adventist Statement on Family Violence," by the General Conference, 14:1 (2002), pp. 32, 33.
- "Birth control: An Adventist statement," by the General Conference, 12:2 (2000), pp. 32, 33.
- "Religious Liberty World Report 2000," by John Graz, 12:3 (2000), pp. 30, 31.
- "Water is good for your heart!," by Dustin Jones, 14:3 (2002), pp. 25, 27.
- "Youth Department for more active campus ministries," by Alfredo Garcia-Marenko, 14:2 (2002), pp. 24, 27.
- Logos**
- "Caleb's finest hour," by Roy Gane, 13:3 (2001), pp. 24, 25.
- "Experience the power of God's Word," by Ulrich Frikart, 11:1 (1999), pp. 24, 25.
- "Facing sin," by David A. Pendleton, 12:1 (2001), pp. 24, 25.
- "Foundations," Gary B. Swanson, 14:2 (2002), pp. 22, 23.
- "Labeling or loving?," by Denise Badger, 15:3 (2003), pp. 24, 25.
- "Life in all its tenses," by Austin C. Archer, 11:3 (1999), pp. 24, 25.
- "Living with certainty in times of trouble," by Carole Ferch-Johnson, 13:2 (2001).
- "No reserve! No retreat! No regret!," by Bruce Campbell Moyer, 14:1 (2002), pp. 24, 25.
- "Shattered dreams and bright hope," by Dona J. Evans, 11:2 (1999), pp. 26, 27.
- "That's what Jesus did for me!," by Wolfgang Stammner, 15:1 (2003), pp. 26, 27.
- "The five excuses of Moses," by Bonita Shields, 13:1 (2001), pp. 24, 25.
- "The voice of conscience," by G. Edward Reid, 12:3 (2000), pp. 22, 23.
- "Three laws of spirituality," by Jan Paulsen, 12:2 (2000), pp. 20, 21.
- "What is truth?," by Willmore Eva, 15:2 (2003), pp. 22, 23.
- "Where is God when life hurts?," by Steve Grimsley, 14:3 (2002), pp. 22, 23.
- Open Forum**
- "Adventist styles of worship," by Bert B. Beach, 14:1 (2002), p. 26.
- "Can we believe in miracles?," by Norman H. Young, 13:1 (2001), p. 19.
- "Dance in the Bible," by Samuele Bacchicchi, 12:3 (2000), p. 25.
- "Geological records and the Genesis time frame," by Leonard Brand, 15:3 (2003), p. 35.
- "Light on the first day of creation," by Richard M. Davidson, 14:3 (2002), pp. 24, 33.
- "Should we ever judge others?," by John M. Fowler, 11:2 (1999), p. 28.
- "Why bother praying?," by Don Driver, 13:2 (2001), p. 19.
- "Why so many Bible versions?," by Steve Thompson, 11:3 (1999), p. 26.
- Profiles**
- "Alois Kinder," by Hans Matschek, 12:1 (2001), pp. 22, 23.
- "Barbara Reynolds," by Jonathan Gallagher, 14:1 (2002), pp. 20, 21, 34.
- "Barry C. Black," by Stephen Chavez, 13:2 (2000), pp. 22, 23.
- "Ben Carson," by Jonathan Gallagher, 15:1 (2003), pp. 24, 25, 31.
- "Carlos Puyol Bul," by Pietro E. Copiz, 11:3 (1999), pp. 22, 23.
- "Eardell Jenner Rashford," by Betty Cooney, 12:1 (2000), pp. 20, 21.
- "Ebenezer Chambi," by Michael Peabody, 13:1 (2001), pp. 22, 23.
- "Floyd Murdoch," by Gary Krause, 14:2 (2002), pp. 18, 19.
- "Francisco de Araujo," by Lincoln Steed, 14:1 (2002), pp. 22, 23.
- "Gloria Diokno," by Linda Mei-Lin Koh, 13:2 (2001), pp. 20, 21.
- "Gwendolyn Winston Foster," by Vikki Montgomery, 13:3 (2001), pp. 20, 21.
- "Heber Pintos," by Humberto M. Rasi, 11:2 (1999), pp. 18, 19.
- "James Graves," by Audrey Stovall, 14:3 (2002), pp. 18, 19, 21.
- "Joan Coggin," by Richard Weismeyer, 12:2 (2000), pp. 20, 21.
- "Kay Kuzma," by Michael Peabody, 11:1 (1999), pp. 20, 21.
- "Kim Gangte," by Dorothy Watts and Dittu Abraham, 11:2 (1999), pp. 16, 17.
- "Leona Glidden Running," by Roberto Clouzet, 11:3 (1999), pp. 20, 21.
- "Manuel Escorcio," by Dick Duerksen, 11:1 (1999), pp. 22, 23.
- "Maria Lee," by Mary Wong, 14:2 (2002), pp. 20, 21.
- "Marilyn Fargo," by Ella Ryzdewski, 15:3 (2003), pp. 20, 21, 31.
- "Marilyn Saavedra," by Humberto M. Rasi, 12:3 (2000), pp. 18, 19.
- "Mary Grace Gallekanao," by Kimberly Luste Maran, 15:1 (2003), pp. 22, 23.
- "Michael Comberiate," by Kimberly Luste Maran, 13:3 (2001), pp. 22, 23.
- "Nery Cruz," by Humberto M. Rasi, 12:2 (2000), pp. 18, 19.
- "Phetsile Kholekile Dlamini," by Percy Peters, 13:1 (2001), pp. 20, 21.
- "Phil McKay," by Gary Krause, 15:2 (2003), pp. 18, 19.
- "Ruy Vieira," by Roberto de Azevedo, 15:3 (2003), pp. 22, 23.
- "Siriporn Tantipoonwinai," by Gilbert M. Valentine, 15:2 (2003), pp. 20, 21, 29.
- "Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse," by Lincoln Steed, 14:3 (2002), pp. 18, 19.
- "Yoshinori Namihira," by Mary Wong, 12:3 (2000), pp. 20, 21.
- Viewpoint**
- "Adventists and human dignity," by John Graz, 15:1 (2003), pp. 19-21.
- "Against silence: A meditation on Kosovo," by Ron Osborn, 12:2 (2000), pp. 28, 29, 31.
- "Do we need Adventist lawyers?," by Karnik Doukmetzian, 11:3 (1999), pp. 30, 31, 34.
- "Ecumenism in the new millennium," by Bert B. Beach, 13:2 (2001), pp. 30, 31.
- "Ethics for scientists: A call for stewardship," by Katrina Bramstedt, 13:3 (2001), pp. 28, 29.
- "God on Trial?," by Edward E. Zinke, 14:2 (2002), pp. 31-33.
- "Pilgrimage from rock," by Brian Neumann, 12:3 (2000), pp. 28, 29.
- "Responsible proselytism: An inter-religious statement," 14:3 (2002), pp. 26, 27.
- "Television and violence: A Christian response to the debate over effects?," by Daniel Reynaud, 12:1 (2000), pp. 25-29.
- "Ten reasons why I believe in God," by Hector Hammerly, 11:1 (1999), pp. 30, 31.
- "Using animals in medical research," by Katrina A. Bramstedt, 15:2 (2003), pp. 24, 25.
- "Vietnam: 25 years later," by Ralph S. Watts, 13:1 (2001), pp. 31, 32.