

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY  
**DIALOGUE**

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**Telling the truth  
about Truth**

**Don't worry about money!**

**The Trinity:  
Why is it important?**

**Married but happy**

**Suicide and the Bible**

**Religion always loses?**

**3**

Volume 16

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# CONTENTS

## ESSAYS

### 5 Telling the truth about Truth

Humanity's perennial search for certainty finds an answer:  
Truth exists and can be found.

*Greg A. King*

### 8 Don't worry about money!

Biblical principles can help you manage your finances  
and develop a realistic budget.

*G. Edward Reid*

### 11 The Trinity: Why is it important?

Divine love flowing from the Father, embodied in Christ, and  
communicated through the Holy Spirit provide the richest theological  
vision imaginable.

*Woodrow W. Whidden*

### 14 Married but happy

As a couple prepares for their wedding, they should consider practical  
principles that can lead to a lasting and fulfilling marriage relationship.

*Alfonso Valenzuela*

## DEPARTMENTS

### EDITORIAL

- 3 Cheers and challenges  
*Martin W. Feldbush*

### 4 LETTERS

#### OPEN FORUM

- 17 Suicide and the Bible  
*Angel Manuel Rodriguez*

#### PROFILES

- 18 Yolanda Morales Romero  
*César Maya Montes*

- 20 Evan Jeremy Paki  
*Jonathan Gallagher*

#### LOGOS

- 22 Transforming prayer  
*Costin Jordache*

#### FIRST PERSON

- 24 In a prison cell: A matter of con-  
science  
*Stanley Maxwell*

#### FOR YOUR INFORMATION

- 26 Seventh-day Adventists and  
Scholarship

### BOOKS

- 28 *Teaching Literature:  
A Seventh-day Adventist Approach*  
(Davis)  
*Wilma McClarty*

- 28 *Knowing God in the Real World*  
(Paullen)  
*Raúl Esperante*

- 29 *Islam in the Post 9/11 World*  
(Schantz)  
*Patrick J. Boyle*

### VIEWPOINT

- 30 Religion always loses?  
*Paul Giem*

### ACTION REPORT

- 34 AMiCUS active in central  
Philippines  
*Kevin Ransom*

- 34 Brazil on the move  
*Fabiana Amaral, Irineo Koch, and  
Erton Kohler*

- 35 Students in Chile hold first  
national congress  
*Erton Kohler*

### INSERT - INTERCHANGE

# EDITORIAL

## Cheers and challenges

In my Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries office at the General Conference sits a beautiful mug I received at Jomo Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya. On its side is a colorful crest with the words “Elimu ni Nguvu,” which translated means “Education is strength.” As I drink from that mug almost daily, I am reminded of Adventist chaplains and faculty who work there and of the Adventist students who study there. Those students are symbolic of the almost 250,000 Adventist young adults attending public colleges and universities around the world. You are probably among that group.

A few days ago I was forwarded a letter from an Adventist student that wanted to know if her church had a plan for ministry with Adventist students in public campuses. As I responded to the young woman, I was aware of some positive signs of ministry in that area, but I have to admit that there is much yet to be done. Indeed, there are some things to cheer and some things to challenge us, and some things to dream about!

I’m gratified that there is a Committee on Adventist Ministry to/with College and University Students (AMiCUS) at the General Conference and in several division and union offices. Through this committee the Education, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, and Youth departments partner to raise awareness of the needs for ministry on public campuses and to provide support to initiatives in that important area.

I’m thankful for the successful track record of public campus ministry in many places around the world. And yet the principal challenge remains: To shape a global vision and plan for public campus ministries. AMiCUS is addressing that goal, but we have a long way to go. My dream for this ministry includes the following:

1. A comprehensive strategy for public campus ministries that the entire church embraces and supports, with resources allocated to do the job.
2. Several models of public campus ministry that have been tested, so we can see what works with students in a postmodern world.
3. A larger number of Adventist students who are not only ministered to, but who are also empowered for ministry themselves—and who serve in the name of Christ.
4. Trained Adventist specialists for public campus ministry, including chaplains and student campus ministry leaders who network with and learn from one another.
5. More Adventist students in public campuses who are fortified with Scripture and are enabled to respond to the great current issues of Christian apologetics.
6. Adventist public campus students who have regular opportunities for fellowship and worship with their peers and members of the local church.
7. A larger number of Adventist students in public campuses who know their church values them, and who in turn choose to invest their time and talents to become leaders of the church today and tomorrow.

If you’ve ever had any of these thoughts, I’d like to hear from you. Send me an email with your ideas to: [acm@gc.adventist.org](mailto:acm@gc.adventist.org). I’ll share them with the General Conference AMiCUS Committee, and this can help us shape a dynamic strategy for the church. Meanwhile, may you enjoy God’s rich blessings as you prepare for a fulfilling life of service.



Martin W. Feldbush  
Vice-chairman of the AMiCUS Committee

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# LETTERS

## Dialogue online

I like *Dialogue* and heard that some of the best articles published in earlier issues of the journal are online. How can I get access to them?

**Eddie Agrellos**  
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*The editors respond:*

It's easy, Eddie. On your computer, get on a search engine, and type in <http://dialogue.adventist.org>. At our website, you'll be able to read the articles in English, French, Portuguese, or Spanish. Enjoy!

## Articles on science subjects

I want to congratulate the *Dialogue* editors for including at least one article in each issue on the interface between science and faith. These articles are well chosen, logically written, and provide a perspective that's rarely found in other publications.

**João Gomes Moreira**  
**BRAZIL**  
Joao.moreira2003@ig.com.br

## Good for sharing

Having been a *Dialogue* reader for several years now, I want to thank those responsible for producing it

and for providing this journal free of charge to Adventist students in public universities. I usually take a copy to my university, share it with my classmates, and notice that they enjoy the content. Although I will graduate soon with an accounting degree, I encourage you to keep up the good work!

**Ericka Yareth Ruiz**  
**COLOMBIA**  
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## Simply the best

I don't know how to tell you how much I appreciate reading each issue of *Dialogue* that reaches me in this little corner of Africa. As an Adventist philosophy student at the university, I consider it the best journal in the world. It gives me ideas, helps me research interesting topics, and is my faithful companion. I don't want to miss a single issue!

**Joseph Abbanan Telemke**  
**University of Yaounde**  
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## Useful for youth meetings

I'm completing a nutrition degree at the university and was recently given a copy of *Dialogue*. What an interesting journal! I found articles that gave me ideas for the youth meeting in my

church and also to share with my fellow students. Thank you!

**Cintia Verónica Vaudagna**  
**Universidad de Córdoba**  
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## Correction

In the biographical section of the interview with Dr. Elaine Kennedy published in *Dialogue* 16:2, we incorrectly stated that she had completed her doctoral studies at the University of California. Dr. Kennedy earned her Ph.D. in geology at the University of Southern California. The editors regret this error.

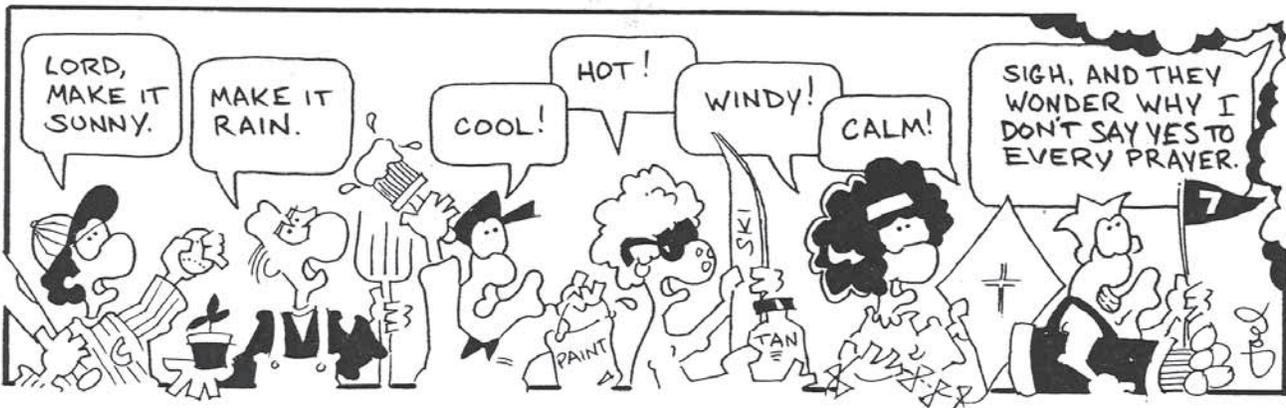
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## Pontius' Puddle



# Telling the truth about Truth

by Greg A. King

## **Humanity's perennial search for certainty finds an answer: Truth exists and can be found.**

“What is truth?” (John 18:38)\*

Pilate's question to Jesus deals with a crucial topic of universal interest. I would like to highlight six truths about Truth that Scripture teaches.

### **Truth No 1: Truth exists**

The Bible calls God “the God of truth” (Psalm 31:5), and says that Jesus came to this Earth “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

Since truth is an essential part of God's nature, since Jesus is said to be full of truth, and since Jesus came to reveal truth to us, we can be certain that truth exists. Several decades ago, this point would not have needed to be made. The existence of absolute truth was simply assumed. However, now we live at a time when many people believe that everything is relative and that there are no moral absolutes. Their moral principles are very malleable, and they maintain that what is truth for one person might not be truth for another. But this is not the biblical perspective! The Bible teaches that there are absolute truths that continue to be true whether one agrees with them or not.

Once I asked a group of college students to close their eyes and point toward what they thought was North. Then I asked them to keep pointing while they opened their eyes. This exercise demonstrated that not everyone had a good grasp on which direction is where. Some were pointing East. Some pointed South, and some West. Maybe some were even pointing up (after all, North is always up on maps!). And some had it right and had a finger pointing northward. But whichever way they were pointing, it

didn't change where North really was.

A flight center director once told me that it is possible for pilots, while flying, to lose track of which way the ground is. In other words, they don't know which way is up and which way is down! This condition is called spatial disorientation or vertigo. Obviously, this would be a dangerous situation for a pilot. If pilots think they are ascending when in actuality they are about to plow a furrow in the ground, the plane is in grave danger.

This deadly condition that pilots sometimes experience is a metaphor for the contemporary world. The world in which we live is experiencing moral vertigo. Many people think down is up, and up is down. And we see the results around us in the disintegration of our families and our society. We hear about horrifying stories and unspeakable atrocities all around us. We seem to be living again in the days of ancient Israel: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25, NKJV).

I am told that a pilot needs the horizon as a reference point, or if the horizon is not visible, the pilot should consult the aircraft instruments, such as the attitude indicator or the altimeter to head off this vertigo. And likewise, Christians need the reference points of the Word of God, a life of prayer, and the counsel and companionship of Christian friends in order to live out the truth in their lives.

Whatever the contemporary world might say, truth does exist. There is an objective reality. There are moral absolutes, there are eternal truths. The truth that Jesus died for your sins and mine. The truth that He is coming again. The truth that He has a plan for each life. The truth that God wants each of us to be part of His family, the church, and to help those in need. Truth does exist.

### **Truth No. 2: Truth matters**

Truth not only exists, it matters. In other words, it is important. It is vital. It is significant.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul declares, “God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.” Also, 3 John 4 states, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.” Since it is through belief in the truth that we are saved, because it brings God joy when we walk in the truth, it is evident that truth matters.

Sometimes we become confused about what really matters in life. We get distracted by sports events, movies, business, or politics. But how we respond to the truth of God matters more than anything else. It matters more than our grades or whether we get accepted to graduate school or medical school or dental school. Truth matters!

Have you noticed that when you realize something affects you, personally and individually, how important it suddenly seems? Suppose you are traveling out of town and you hear on the radio that a natural disaster, such as an earthquake or a tornado, has struck your hometown. You are suddenly all ears. You want to find out everything you can about the extent of the disaster. Why? Because it affects you. And that is why truth matters so much. It involves everyone.

How we respond to God's truth affects the quality of our lives on this earth. Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). The happiest, most fulfilled, most satisfying life that one can live is a life that is committed to truth. And of course, how we respond to truth affects us not only now, but also for eternity. Our response to the One who is the embodiment of truth determines whether we will be able to live forever.

Sometimes when a big football game is about to begin, as the camera focuses on the festive environment and all the spectators preparing to cheer for their favorite team, the commentator says, "It doesn't get any better than this!" As if to suggest that this game that is about to be played is the most important thing on the face of the planet.

With due appreciation for football commentators and fans, I would say it does get better, a lot better than this. When you live in a relationship with Jesus Christ, when you have the full assurance of His love, when you are looking forward to His return, when you are married to the spouse God has led you to, when you hold your child in your arms, that is when you can truly say, "It doesn't get any better than this." Truth matters!

**Truth No. 3:  
Truth must be sought**

The Bible underscores that truth must be sought. That is, we must seek

for it and inquire after it. Since truth is so important, it might be nice if we possessed it innately, if it were intrinsic to humans. If the knowledge of truth could be as natural and automatic for humans as the ability to swim is for ducks.

But truth is not inherently ours, nor is it dropped in our laps. God wants us to diligently and earnestly search for truth. The Lord declares, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). And what this verse states about finding God is also the case for discovering truth, one of His foremost qualities. In other words, we find truth when we search for it with all our hearts.

Someone might ask, "What does it mean to really seek after truth, to truly seek it with all my heart and soul?" Let me illustrate with a story. I was speaking at a camp meeting several years ago, and I did something I shouldn't have done. My wife and I had finished eating at the dining area

and were engaged in conversation with some other adults. My young son was restless, so I told him he could go back to our room at the lodge. It was just a block away, but it required him to go over a main road in an area crawling with tourists. After my wife and I finished our visit and arrived back at the lodge, we couldn't see our son anywhere. We searched and called, but he was nowhere to be found. So we began looking for him frantically, searching at the lodge, then running back to the campground, doing everything we could to find our son. Every ounce of energy we had was focused on that search. That's what it means to seek for something with all one's heart! And what an incredible joy it was to find our son!

Each of us needs to examine our own heart. What are we seeking in life? What are we really focused on in our education or profession? God calls us to do more than just prepare for or succeed in a career. He wants us to be committed to seeking truth.

**Truth No. 4: Truth is in a person**

The fourth truth that the Bible states about truth is this: Truth is wrapped up in and flows out of a person. To elaborate, truth is not just a set of principles, nor is it merely certain doctrines of Scripture. Rather, truth is found in a Person. Notice John 14:6: "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"

Occasionally, I do a bit of premarital counseling. Sometimes couples will want to make sure that all the details of their new life together are arranged prior to marriage—that they are financially secure, have good jobs, and a place to live. And while all of these things have some significance and it is helpful to have cared for them, they aren't nearly as important as knowing that marriage is primarily about being in a permanent relationship with another person, about being attuned to the other person's needs, and tak-

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ing time to listen to and care for one's spouse.

Simply put, a Christian is a follower of Christ. An Adventist Christian is a follower of Christ who is looking forward to His soon return. And a Seventh-day Adventist Christian is a follower of Jesus who is so deeply in love with Jesus that he or she has a foretaste of heaven every Sabbath while awaiting His soon return.

The fact that truth is wrapped up in a Person doesn't diminish the importance of the teachings of Scripture. It doesn't minimize doctrine. To the contrary, it shows that all biblical truths radiate out of the One who declared Himself the way, the truth, and the life.

#### **Truth No. 5: Truth requires us to take a stand**

The Bible emphasizes that truth requires us to take a stand. In other words, many times it's not easy to live for truth. Sometimes it requires courage and bravery.

In a stirring passage, Paul exhorted the believers at Ephesus, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.... So that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist" (Ephesians 6:10-14).

Four times in this brief passage Paul uses the word stand. He challenges us to stand firm. And having done all else, to stand.

Sometimes when we think about standing for truth, we think about those heroes of the Bible. People like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who defied the king's order to fall down and worship the image when the music played (see Daniel 3). They could have tried to rationalize kneeling down. They could have reasoned, "How can we serve the Lord if we are

executed?" They could have said to themselves, "Yes, we will kneel down, but we will pray to the true God in our hearts. What is wrong with that?" But they didn't engage in any sophisticated compromises. They stood for truth. They stood straight and tall. And because of this, when they stood in the furnace, they didn't stand alone.

We think of Stephen, who prayed for the forgiveness of his killers even as rocks rained down on him (see Acts 7:59, 60), and we think of Peter who said, "We must obey God rather than men" (see Acts 5:29). These stories are wonderful and inspiring, but it is also the case that people are still standing for truth today.

I think of an Adventist young man who graduated from law school and was applying for a job with a prestigious law firm. It so happened this particular firm was representing the tobacco industry. He was asked how he felt about working for this industry. He could have shaded his views about cigarettes in order to get the job, but he didn't. No, he didn't get the job, but he had the satisfaction of standing for truth.

How is it with each of us? When accosted by sexual temptation, when enticed by alcohol, when invited to do anything that would compromise our commitment to Jesus Christ, how do we respond? The only truth worth having is a truth that requires us to stand.

#### **Truth No. 6: Truth sets us free**

As John 8:32 proclaims, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

I remember an important moment in my own emancipation. It happened in a dormitory prayer group at Georgia-Cumberland Academy in October 1975. As I knelt there with some of my friends, as we shared and prayed together, I opened my heart to the Lord in a new and meaningful way, and the peace and love of Jesus came flooding over me. I sensed God's

presence in a way that I had not sensed it before.

If someone should ask, Can you describe this moment of conversion in an analytical and dispassionate way?, the answer would be No. It would be like asking someone to describe in an equation what it is like to be in love.

While I have had many sensations in the days and years that have followed that encounter with my Lord, one of the most profound is freedom. Freedom from the burden of sin. Freedom from habits and passions that would enslave me. Freedom to become the person God meant for me to be. Freedom to live a life in relationship with my Creator and Redeemer.

And the same experience is available for all. As Jesus declared, you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

\*Unless otherwise indicated, all biblical verses quoted in this article are from the New International Version.

Greg A. King (Ph.D., Union Theological Seminary) was chair of the Religion Department at Pacific Union College when he wrote this article. He now serves as Professor of Biblical Studies at Southern Adventist University. His address: P.O. Box 370; Collegedale, Tennessee 37315; U.S.A.

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# Don't worry about money!

by G. Edward Reid

## **Biblical principles can help you manage your finances and develop a realistic budget.**

Got money worries? Who doesn't? Actually, many Christians don't. They have learned and practiced biblical principles of money management and have virtually eliminated financial stress. They trust in the providence of God, and He provides the management principles they need to follow.

Some time ago, a young woman called my office while I was away speaking at a church meeting. My assistant told her that I was out and would be back in the office and available for counseling the following Monday. The woman was so stressed by her financial situation that she continued to call my office every day until I returned. In addition to her desperate calls, she also cried in my assistant's ear each time she called. When I reached this young wife on the phone, she explained that she had just returned from the office of an attorney who told her she had only one solution, and that was to file for bankruptcy protection. But she said, "I don't think that filing for bankruptcy is the right thing for a Christian to do, do you?"

"Not if you can avoid it," I responded. Then I asked her, "What is the amount of your debt?"

She said, "We owe more than \$300,000 dollars!"

This young family was just out of graduate school. What could I say to them? It popped into my mind that perhaps they had overindulged in their home purchase. So I asked, "How much of this debt is your home mortgage?" She told me that they didn't own a home; they were renting. Their debt was in three categories: back taxes, student loans, and credit cards. Because of my biblical convictions, I

asked if they had been tithing.

She said, "No. We can't afford to." I responded, "You have called me as a Christian attorney, so I will ask you a Christian question. The question is: How can you expect God to bless your family when you are robbing Him?" You can write the end of the story – follow God's principles and be blessed or keep following your own way and have more stress.

This is the Old Testament syndrome of grief and sorrow due to living in a state of disharmony with God and His counsel. God told Judah, "You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes" (Haggai 1:6, NKJV).

### **Reasons for financial problems**

In 15 years of financial counseling, I have found three primary reasons that get people into financial difficulty. I will list them in the order of greatest frequency. The first is *ignorance*. Many people, even college graduates, are financially illiterate. They simply have never been exposed to the biblical or even secular principles of money management. There is hope for these people. The bulk of this article will provide a simple outline of these principles and how to apply them.

The second reason for financial difficulty is *greed and selfishness*. In response to advertising and personal wants, some people simply live beyond their means. They are not willing to live in, drive, or wear what they can really afford. Many of these same people also feel that they are too poor to tithe. Consequently, they live their lives without God's promised wisdom and blessing. (See Proverbs 3:5-10.) There is hope for these people also, but it requires a change of heart—the reception of a gift from God called contentment. Paul exhorts, "But godliness with contentment is great gain.

For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Timothy 6:6-9, NKJV).

The third reason people find themselves in financial difficulty is because of *some unfortunate tragedy*. For example, they may have experienced a serious illness without adequate health insurance or left without a job for a variety of reasons. They may have been abandoned by a spendthrift marriage partner. A natural disaster may have wiped out their possessions. Or they may have been born and raised in abject poverty. There is hope for these people, too. Though their path is more difficult, their poverty can be overcome. Change may come from the support of Christian friends; the counsel and/or assistance of godly people; hard work coupled with a good education; and the blessing and providence of God. But enough about the problems. Let's focus now on what you can do to experience financial freedom.

### **Seven biblical principles**

This article will be of more benefit to readers if I provide some practical guidance on what to do to obtain peace and freedom in one's finances. With this in mind, I will share seven biblical principles for money management followed by seven steps to assure financial success. First the biblical principles:

1. *God is the owner of everything* (Psalm 24:1; 50:12; 1 Chronicles 29:13, 14). As Christians, we understand that we brought nothing into this world, and we are not taking anything out. While we live on this Earth, we are simply managers of what God has entrusted to us. Faithfulness is all that matters.

2. *God and His wisdom and counsel must take first place in our lives*

(Proverbs 3:5-9; Matthew 6:33). God can see our lives from the beginning to the end. He knows what is best for us and desires that we prosper. This is not the simplistic question, "What would Jesus do?" but rather we ask, "What is His counsel in this area of my life?"

3. *Our purpose in life is to glorify God* (Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 10:31). Secular persons seek to prosper so they can spend and accumulate. Christians seek to prosper so they can provide for their own needs, the needs of others, and help advance the cause of God. They are God's ambassadors.

4. *Prosperity is having what we need when we need it* (Philippians 4:19; Isaiah 26:3). God has not promised us that if we become Christians we will become wealthy by society's standards. But He has promised that if we serve Him, He will provide for our needs, be with us wherever we go, and give us peace in our hearts.

5. *Debt is bad* (Proverbs 22:7; Romans 13:8, Psalm 37:21). Recognizing and following this single principle would do more than anything else to bring peace to our families and prosperity to the cause of God. Debt causes strife in families and stress in individual lives.

6. *The tithe is the minimum testimony of our Christian commitment* (Genesis 14:20; 28:20-22; Leviticus 27:30; Malachi 3:6-11). From the perspective of one who reads through the Bible each year to review the big picture, I can tell you that nowhere in the Bible does God suggest that less than a tenth is His. Failure to recognize and practice this principle cuts us off from God's wisdom and blessing. (See Deuteronomy chapter 28.)

7. *Everyone must give an account to God of his or her money management* (Matthew 25:19-29; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 22:12). There is nothing more certain in Scripture than the fact that we must all face the judgment of God. When settling accounts with those who are faithful, God says, "Well done, good and faithful servant;

you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matthew 25:21, NKJV).

### Seven steps to success

Once we understand the biblical principles of management, we can simply apply them to our everyday lives. This can be done by making the following points part of our lifestyles:

- Get organized. Develop a budget. Have a plan.
- Spend less than you earn. Determine to live within your means.
- Save a little every pay period. Start with only \$50 toward an emergency fund.
- Avoid debt like a disease. Interest is one expense we can live without.
- Be a diligent worker (Proverbs 22:29).
- Be faithful to God. He has given us so many promises (Deuteronomy 28:1-14). We cannot afford to live without God's blessing.
- Remember that the Earth in its current condition is not our real home. Our management here determines our eternal destiny.

### A simple guideline budget

For most people, the idea of living with a budget is about as exciting as going on a diet. However, the following guideline budget is not hard to set up or follow and will soon have you living a lifestyle that brings real satisfaction. This budget will also help you to incorporate the success points listed above.

Start by totaling all your monthly income from every source. Or you can determine your annual income and divide by 12. This is the gross amount that you have to work with, but not the amount upon which your budget is made.

Next set aside your tithe and offerings. This would be 10 percent for the

tithe plus whatever you want to systematically set aside for your offerings. For the sake of illustration, let's make this amount a total of 15 percent.

I hate to mention it, but the next item is taxes. Try to determine the tax bracket that you are in and subtract that amount from your gross income after your tithe and offerings. Let's just make that amount 25 percent. I call these two items "nondiscretionary" because if we are Christians, we will faithfully put God first and also be good citizens, contributing our taxes. So even before we begin the budget process, we have used 40 percent of our income.

The 60 percent remaining becomes our "net spendable income." For budgeting purposes, this 60 percent of gross income becomes 100 percent of our budget money. In other words, after tithe, offerings, and taxes are removed, the balance of your income becomes the full amount of your available money for your budget. This guideline budget, as you adapt it to your own personal situation, is appropriate for both single and married individuals.

Most people find that there are ten major categories of spending in daily life. For those with children in school or who are students themselves, an 11th category must be added for educational expenses. With a guideline budget, we assign a percentage of the available budget money to each of the 10 categories as follows:

- Housing : 30%. This includes house mortgage or rent, insurance, taxes, and utilities.
- Food: 15%. This may include other items purchased at the grocery store.
- Auto: 17%. This includes car payments, gas and oil, insurance, and maintenance.
- Insurance: 5%. Basically, life and medical/health insurance.
- Debt reduction: 5%. Many families will need more in this item.
- Recreation: 5%. For example,

vacations, eating out, sport activities, etc.

- Clothing: 5%. Purchase and cleaning of clothes.
- Savings: 10%. Save something, even if in debt, as it requires self-denial.
- Medical: 3% For items not covered by insurance.
- Miscellaneous: 5%. Gifts, barber, beauty, subscriptions, toiletry, cash.

Total: 100%

The beauty of this guideline budget is that it can be adapted to individual situations. For example, if you need 35 percent for housing needs, you can do it. But you must take the extra

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percentage points from one or more other categories. You only have 100 percent to spend, or you go in debt. In addition, if you add the 11th category for education expenses, you must also get the percentage needed from other categories. This is why students and parents with children in school must live very frugally to avoid running up huge debts.

It has been said that “He who rides a tiger cannot dismount.” From a financial perspective, that tiger is debt. Debt is the most highly advertised commodity that comes through the mail in many countries. I am speaking of the dozens of credit card offers sent to families in the mail each month.

Many young people ask about student loans. Here is my answer: All loans have to be paid back with interest. But student loans are not like running up a credit card by eating out and buying music CDs. If the education being sought will enhance earning power, then a student loan may be advisable as a last resort. But first, the student must work as much as possible, save as much as possible, get grants and scholarships; and then, if necessary, borrow only the minimum amount needed to pay tuition. The bottom line is that college graduates will earn almost twice as much in their lifetime as high school graduates. A person with a professional degree will earn twice as much as a college graduate (if they work in the public market). So education for a marketable profession is valuable. In addition, a well educated Christian is better able to serve God and humanity.

Financial planners generally encourage people to look at their lives in three segments. They are the accumulation years, the preservation years,

and the distribution years. From a Christian perspective, we could refer to this triad as the learning years, the earning years, and the returning years. When we are young, we don't want to concern ourselves with growing old; however, barring early terminal illness, fatal accident, or the second coming of Christ, we will all grow old and die. For most people, there comes a time in life when, because of physical or other limitations, they must cut back or terminate gainful employment. Financial provision and planning must be made for this period of time. If we can retire debt-free, with a home paid off and no other significant debts, this time of life will be much easier.

Finally, we all know that someday, either at death or the Second Coming, we will have to walk off and leave all our earthly possessions. We can't take them with us (1 Timothy 6:7). But Jesus encouraged His followers to store up treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:20). We can do this by helping others and advancing the cause of God. It is true that we can't take it with us, but we can send it on ahead! May we find the peace that passes understanding as we seek to follow the Great Shepherd and His invaluable principles.

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# The Trinity: Why is it important?

by Woodrow W. Whidden

## ***Divine love flowing from the Father, embodied in Christ, and communicated through the Holy Spirit provide the richest theological vision imaginable.***

I do not recall hearing a sermon on the Trinity during my growing-up years. In fact, not until my last year in the Seminary had I ever had any sustained discussion of the doctrine. In a seminar on the Doctrine of God, my professor led us in a detailed discussion of the doctrine's history and biblical basis. But I must confess that it all sounded a bit arcane and impractical. My theological trajectory, however, was to gradually evolve into a preoccupation which has now become a passion. My indifference has moved to the settled conviction that the doctrine of the Trinity is the central theological statement of Christian thought and practice. In fact, far from being an irrelevant mystery, it expresses the core of what Christians want to confess about the nature of God and His vision for human happiness.

Thinking about theology involves two essential steps. First, the "what?" of the doctrine. This "what?" phase involves two important facets: (1) clearly stating the doctrine; and (2) assessing the biblical basis for the teaching. Second, the "so what?" reflections. This phase seeks to clarify such issues as the theological and practical implications of the doctrine—especially its coherence with other Christian teachings and the question of personal salvation, or reconciliation with God.

### **The "what?" of the Trinity**

The Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief No. 2 spells out

the doctrine: "There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons."<sup>1</sup> With regard to this statement, both the early Christian church and the Seventh-day Adventist movement have had to deal with key challenges. The question of God the Father has never been controversial due to long tradition of orthodox Christian teaching. While the vast majority of Christians have affirmed the eternal deity of the Father, controversies have always swirled around the questions of the full and eternal deity of the Son, the divine personhood of the Holy Spirit, and the profound oneness of the Trio. Space does not permit a detailed discussion of the biblical evidence for God's triune oneness, but if we can settle the full deity of the Son and the Spirit, it seems only logical that there would be a profound oneness with the Father. Thus Christians have confessed that there is One God (monotheism) who is manifest as Tri-Personal oneness in love (not three Gods, or tri-theism).

### **The full deity of the Son**

Basically, three major types of biblical evidence show that Jesus was inherently divine, having the same nature and substance as His Father.<sup>2</sup>

1. *Jesus is expressly called God in the New Testament.* Hebrews 1 compares Jesus to the angels. In verses 7 and 8 the author claims that while God made the angels to be "spirits and his ministers a flame of fire" (vs. 7, KJV), "to the Son He says: 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever'" (vs. 8, KJV). Verse 8 is one of seven direct New Testament applications of the Greek word for God (*theos*) to Jesus (the other six: John 1:1, 18; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; and 2 Peter 1:1).

Let's be very clear as to what the New Testament writers and especially the author of Hebrews are saying in these verses: they are referring to Jesus

as "God," and in Hebrews the writer is interpreting the Old Testament by applying to Jesus a Psalm (45:6) originally addressed to the God of the Old Testament.

2. *Jesus applies divine titles and claims to Himself.* The most singular example is found in John 8:58: "Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM'" (NKJV). Quite simply what Jesus was saying is that He was none other than the God of the Exodus and He did this by applying Exodus 3:14 to Himself: "And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.'"

Furthermore, this "God" who speaks in Exodus 3:14 goes on to clarify His identity as "The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." In other words, Jesus not only claimed to be the God of the Exodus, but also the "LORD" (*Yahweh*) of the patriarchs. Is it any wonder that the unbelieving Pharisees "took up stones to throw at Him" (John 8:59)—the Old Testament punishment for blasphemy (see John 5:17 where Jesus makes a similar claim)?

3. *Application of divine names to Jesus by New Testament writers.* In Hebrews 1:10-12 Inspiration applies the supreme Old Testament title for God (JHWH or *Yahweh*) to Jesus. The author of Hebrews does this by applying Psalm 102:25-27 to Jesus. It was not unusual for the New Testament writers to do this; but what is striking about this application is that this Psalm was addressed originally to the "LORD" (*Yahweh*) of the Old Testament. Thus the New Testament author is quite comfortable with applying passages which were originally addressed to the self-existent God of Israel to Jesus. The strong implication is that Jesus is the "LORD" Jehovah (JHWH) of the Old Testament. Revelation 1:17 describes a similar

usage of the Old Testament title, “the First and the Last.”

### The full deity of the Holy Spirit

The Scriptures supply numerous lines of evidence that witness to the divine nature of the Spirit. The most representative comes from the Book of Acts in the tragic story of Ananias and Sapphira. This couple privately went back on the sacred vows they had made to God. When they came to publicly lay their partial offerings at the feet of the apostles, they were summarily struck dead. Peter gave a very impressive explanation of their impending fate: You have lied to the Holy Spirit. This is followed with the stunning revelation that they had “not lied to men but to God” (Acts 5: 3, 4, NKJV). The most obvious implication is that the Holy Spirit is a divine being.

The next line of evidence is found in the many passages which describe the work of the Spirit as that which is unique to God. The clearest example of this is in 1 Corinthians 2: 9-11.

Paul declares that his readers may have a knowledge of “what God has prepared for those who love him” (vs. 9, NRSV). And how is such knowledge possible? “These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit” (vs. 10). And how is it that the Spirit is privy to such knowledge? “The Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God’s except the Spirit of God” (vs. 10, 11).

What the passage suggests is this: If anyone wants to know “what is truly human” they must get such information from one who is a human being. What, however, is true on a human level, is even more true on the divine: “Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God” (v. 11, NKJV). Only a divine being can truly know what is in the mind and heart of another divine being.

### The “so what?” of the Trinity

What are the key “so what’s?” of the full deity of both the Son and the Spirit? Before we address these important questions, we need to deal with an issue that bothers many: the seeming lack of logic in confessing that three equals one. Such issues are especially bothersome to the rationalistic mind of many university students in the West and to our strongly monotheistic Muslim friends.

*The logical objection.* Millard Erickson has suggested that the human reason will not tolerate such fuzzy, “three = one” Trinitarian math. If you go to a grocery store and take three loaves of bread to the checkout counter and tried to persuade the clerk that they are really one and all that you have to pay for is for one, the clerk might be tempted to quickly call for store security.<sup>3</sup>

The first response to the logic of Trinitarian thought is to admit that we are dealing with the profoundest of mysteries. In loving relationships, there does appear to develop a profound social or emotional oneness. Are we then to say that loving relationships are totally illogical and incoherent? We think not. And this seems to be the best way to give a coherent account of the mystery of the Trinity and its plural oneness.

Once more, Erickson wisely points the way to a credible response: “We therefore propose thinking of the Trinity as a society of persons, who, however, are one being. While this society of persons has dimensions to its inter-relationships that we do not find among humans, there are some illuminating parallels. Love is the binding relationship within the Godhead that unites each of the persons with each of the others.”<sup>4</sup>

Not surprisingly, Erickson then appeals directly to 1 John 4:8, 16: “God is love.” Do we truly comprehend the depths of this inspired statement that is so disarming in its seeming simplicity? We would suggest

that these three words have a profound contribution to make to our understanding of a God who has eternally preexisted in a state of Trinitarian “oneness.” “The statement... ‘God is love,’ is not a definition of God, nor is it merely a statement of one attribute among others. It is a very basic characterization of God.”<sup>5</sup>

For Trinitarian Christians, the key question about God has ultimate reference to the issue of His love. And if God is not “love” in the very core of His being, then any questions about His nature quickly descend to a state of biblical irrelevance. We, however, sense that love is the most basic characterization of God. If God is truly—in His very essence—the God of “love” (John 3:16 and 1 John 4:8), then we need to consider the following implications:

Could One who has existed from all eternity and who made us in His loving image—could this God truly be called love if He existed only as a solitary or unitarian being? Is not love, especially divine love, possible only if the One who made our universe was a plural being who was exercising “love” within His divine plurality (Trinitarian) from all eternity past? Is not real, selfless love possible only if it proceeds from the kind of God who, by nature, was and is and shall eternally be a God of love as a social Trinity?

We feel strongly impelled to affirm that God is a Trinity of love and that this love has found its most moving revelation in the creative work, Incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of the fully divine Son of God. God’s Trinitarian oneness, in the finale, is not illogical. In fact, it is the source of the only logic which makes any ultimate sense—a love that is self-sacrificing, mutually submissive, and eternally outward flowing in the grace of creative and redemptive power.

Such infinite love, however, must be practically communicated to finite and sinful human beings. And here is where the “so what?” of the full deity

of the Son and the Spirit play out in the drama of creation and redemption.

### **The deity of Christ: Implications**

First, before the Trinity could ever bring the effectiveness of Christ's saving life and death to bear on the salvation of sinners, there was the urgent need to reveal to sin-alienated human beings what God is truly like. And the only being who could offer such an arresting revelation of the divine nature would be God Himself. And this was the primary mission of Jesus, the divine Son of God.

Now, when it comes to the actual provision for salvation, especially in His atoning death, only One who is equal with the Father in divine nature could offer a sacrifice that would fully satisfy God's divine justice. And only the fully divine Christ, through the Holy Spirit, would be powerful enough to re-create sin-scarred human beings into the likeness of the divine character. In other words, only the divine Son could effect conversion or the new birth, and bring about character change that would reflect the divine likeness. To sum it up, only the Son who is love incarnate could manifest and effect such a transforming love.

### **The full deity of the Spirit**

As with the deity of the Son, so the theological implications of the deity of the Spirit arise out of the issues related to God's intention to redeem sin-marred humanity.

Most certainly, if only One who is equal in nature and character to the Father could offer an effectively saving sacrifice for sin, then by the same token, only One (the Spirit) who is fully divine could effectually communicate the efficacy of this sacrifice to sinful human beings. Again, it takes a fully divine Spirit to reveal to the sinner the work of the fully divine Son (1 Corinthians 2: 7-12).

Only the Holy Spirit could bring the converting and convicting power

of God's great love to fallen humanity. Only One who has been eternally bound up with the heart of self-sacrificing love in the Father and the Son can fully communicate such love to lost humanity.

Only One who has worked with the Son in creation, would be equipped to effect re-creation in souls ravaged by the destructive forces of Satan and sin (Romans 8:10, 11).

Only One who can be fully in tune with the heart of Jesus' incarnate ministry, and yet at the same time be able to be everywhere at once (the omnipresence of God), could ably represent the personal, redeeming presence of Christ to the entire world. The only being who could do such a thing is the personal, ever- and all-present Holy Spirit.

### **An appeal**

I want to challenge each reader to ponder prayerfully and carefully the Trinity and its profound implications for the life and destiny that the God of the Bible is offering to humanity. This doctrine meets the demands of modernity's lust for a rational reflection on the human/divine predicament and at the same time offers a truly enticing mystery for the tastes of the more relational "postmoderns." Furthermore, Trinitarian thought and life offer a vision of living in loving relationships, which reflects the most profound reality offered by the One Who has made the world in love and is seeking to redeem it from sin (which is un-love—the most profound antithesis of divine love).

Furthermore, I cannot think of any better point of discussion when seeking to relate to the monotheistic concerns of our Muslim friends. If the love of Jesus, the point Man for the loving Trinity, cannot carry the day, nothing will. The resources of the love flowing from the Father, embodied in the Incarnate Christ and communicated by the fully divine Person of the Holy Spirit provide the richest

theological vision imaginable for the destiny of a lost world.

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# Married but happy

by Alfonso Valenzuela

**As a couple prepares for their wedding, they should consider practical principles that can lead to a lasting and fulfilling marriage relationship.**

Michael and Jennifer arrived at the long-awaited wedding they had planned and saw it unfold like a beautiful dream. Everything about it was elegant and carefully designed.

Michael reflected on all that had happened during the last two and a half years. He felt sure that they had been the most wonderful years of his life. And Jennifer felt like the happiest woman in the whole world. Being with Michael and knowing they would now be together always filled her with deep emotion.

Michael and Jennifer were experiencing the special feelings of people who believe they have found their “soul mate.” They felt that their dreams had come true and that their needs would be satisfied.

Almost every human being wants to

establish a home with someone who is his or her “other half”; someone who will share the intimacy and life experiences that cannot be shared with anyone else. They believe that in this way they will be completely fulfilled.

## The first couple

The beginning of the Bible record indicates that God created human beings with an inborn desire for a life companion with whom to establish a home. God said: “It is not good that the man should be alone” and then created a “help meet for him” (Genesis 2:18, KJV). Only then did Adam become a whole being.

Many people have problems finding their “help meet.” Too often, they find someone who is not a help but a hindrance, and they end up feeling it’s better to live alone than in bad company.

## Why marriages fail

Many fail to find a “help meet” because they ignore one or more of the steps required for a successful courtship. Those who fail in courtship are very likely to fail in marriage. Couples who have difficulties in the dating stage of their relationship diminish their chances of having a successful marriage. They start off on the wrong foot and stumble all the way. (See “Characteristics of a happy courtship.”)

## From this day forward

Standing before the minister, Michael and Jennifer promised each other “to live together after God’s ordinance in the holy state of matrimony...to love, honor, and cherish...in sickness and in health, in prosperity and adversity...and forsaking all others, keep only to each other, so long as you both shall live.” Both of them firmly answered, “I do!”

During the ceremony, the minister quoted Tertullian’s words which have inspired couples across the centuries: “How beautiful is the marriage of

two Christians, two who are one in hope, one in desire, one in lifestyle, one in the religion they practice. Nothing divides them, in flesh or in spirit. They pray together, worship together, fast together; they instruct each other, they encourage each other, they strengthen each other. Side by side they visit the house of God and take part in the divine banquets; together they face difficulties and persecutions and share their consolation. They keep no secrets from each other; never avoid each other’s company; never bring sadness to each other’s heart. They visit the sick and help the needy. They sing psalms and hymns to each other, seeking always to praise the Lord in beauty. Hearing and seeing them, Christ rejoices. To such he bestows his peace.” (Quoted by William J. McRae, *Biblioteca Sacra*, 1987).

When Jennifer’s father gave her away to be married, he felt a knot in his throat. Her mother felt faint as she saw her little girl leave home for good. What a hopeless dilemma parents face—they suffer when their children get married, and they suffer if their children never marry. But that suffering does not compare to the agony of seeing them fail in marriage.

What was in store for Michael and Jennifer in their new married life? Were these young sailors, being

## Characteristics of a happy courtship

1. Lots of love and romance
2. Tenderness and understanding
3. Absence of emotional or physical abuse
4. Lots of conversation
5. Listening to advice from others (especially parents)
6. Praying together that God will direct their future
7. Reading about courtship and marriage
8. Affection without sexual excitement
9. Premarital counseling
10. Avoidance of rushing into marriage

## Wrong reasons for getting married

1. Pregnancy
2. Shame—intimacy has gotten out of hand
3. Pity for somebody
4. Rebound or getting even
5. Escape from a bad relationship
6. Pressure from parents, friends, or society
7. Romance—“marriage will be even more romantic”
8. Financial advantages

hurled into life's ocean in their little boat called marriage, prepared for the surprises awaiting them beyond the horizon? Would they survive the storms, or would they be destroyed by the fury of the problems encountered in the crossing? They were determined to triumph, whatever the obstacles. Oh, how they wanted happiness! And yet the statistics, the odds, were against them.

### Against all odds

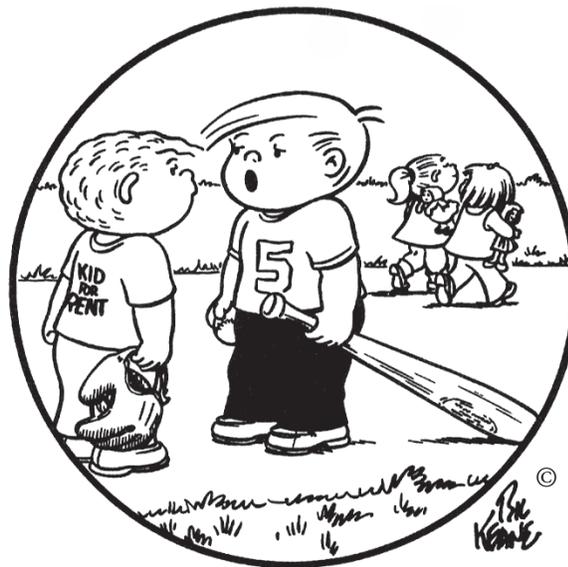
Divorce statistics are alarming. Out of every two marriages performed each year in the United States, one ends in divorce within the first seven years. Could Michael and Jennifer be that failed marriage? According to J. Carl Laney, in his book *The Divorce Myth*, the Census Bureau of the United States reports that in 1920, there was one divorce for every seven marriages; in 1940 it was one out of every six; in 1960 one out of four; and in 1977 one out of every two marriages ended in divorce. Between 1967 and 1977 the frequency of divorces doubled. In the 1980s divorces constituted 53 percent of the total number of marriages. At that rate, says Laney, there will soon be one divorce for every marriage. (See side bar: "Wrong reasons for getting married")

### Marriage is still the favorite relationship

With such a record, who wants to

#### Benefits of marriage

1. Married people report greater happiness than single people.
2. Married people have better mental health than single people.
3. Married people are better off financially.
4. Married companionship is unique.
5. Married people enjoy fulfilling intimacy.



"Girls are called the opposite sex 'cause they always want to do the opposite of what we want to do."

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get married? Well, almost everybody! A high percentage of the population will eventually stand before the altar. It is estimated that 96 percent of men and women get married. Of those who divorce, half will marry again. Due to its perceived benefits, humanity is completely devoted to the idea of marriage. In spite of the pain experienced by those who divorce, marriage continues to be the favorite relationship for the majority of men and women. In contemporary society this relationship still provides, among other advantages, the opportunity for satisfying the felt need for intimacy and security. (See side bar: "Benefits of marriage")

In spite of the advantages offered by married life, modern marriages don't seem to hit the expected target. In their book *Mirages of Marriage*, William Lederer and Don Jackson report that barely 10 to 15 percent of married people enjoy a happy relationship. Early in their married life, many discover marriage isn't exactly what they expected or were searching for in life.

Many marriages turn from Romeo and Juliet to Romeo *versus* Juliet. From "two in one" to "two in everything." It seems that after the honeymoon, the honey vanishes and the couple is

left with the burden of the moon. In *Intimate Life Styles*, sociologist Mervyn Cadwallader states the following about contemporary marriages:

"The truth that I observe is that contemporary marriages are a shattered institution. They expel voluntary affection and love that is unselfishly given and received with joy. Beautiful romances are transformed into boring marriages and eventually the relationship turns corrosive and destructive. This once beautiful romance becomes nothing more than a bitter obligation and contract."

What could have been a great bless-

#### The most common marriage problems

1. Communication
2. Children
3. Sex
4. Money
5. Recreation
6. Relatives
7. Unfaithfulness
8. Housework
9. Physical abuse
10. Other issues

ing is transformed into a terrible curse. As a result, many marriages end up in divorce.

### **A thorn in the flesh?**

Marriage is not easy. Not only is it difficult to find our “help meet,” it’s hard to adjust to living with that person. The Apostle Paul suggests that married partners will have “trouble in the flesh” (1 Corinthians 7:28, KJV). This affliction begins very early in marriage, many times during the honeymoon and is due to the normal adjustment period. It is here where two minds seek to agree on everything and find that it is not only difficult, but virtually impossible to do so.

For many, the honeymoon ends too soon. The sweetness that is so important in a happy marriage begins to dwindle drastically. From the moment of the first disagreement, which can begin as soon as the wedding is over, to a few days of living together, the couple discovers that “love is blind, but marriage soon opens its eyes”.

Romeo and Juliet go on their honeymoon, and in a few days Romeo turns against Juliet, and their home becomes a battlefield. It’s a war that has no victors, only losers. (See side bar: “The most common marriage problems.”)

### **Marriage can be happy**

It is possible to have an enduring, happy marriage if both partners sincerely desire it and make every effort to achieve it. Although most marriages go through critical periods, difficulties can be overcome.

What makes a happy marriage? What factors must be achieved in order to attain it? In a survey I conducted among 100 couples, I found the following factors to be vital. They are listed in order of importance.

1. Clear and constant communication between married partners. Dr. Norman Wright considers communication the key to a happy marriage.
2. Mutual love and expressions

## **How to have a happy marriage**

1. Don't stop being sweethearts.
2. Remember there is no problem that can't be solved with God's help.
3. Spend a lot of time together.
4. Be demonstrative in love.
5. Keep the lines of communication open.
6. Pray together.
7. Seek professional help when necessary.

of affection, not only in word but also in deed. This includes caressing, kissing, hugs, holding hands, and saying “I love you.” Couples need to continue doing the same things they did when they were dating.

3. Religion in the home. Let Christ be the center and everything else will follow. Faith practices include Bible reading, family worship, church attendance, and prayer.
4. Mutual respect and understanding between partners. This means being conscious of the burdens and responsibilities each carries and helping each other as much as possible.
5. Paying attention to family finances. This includes achieving the highest possible degree of solvency through the planning and execution of a family budget.
6. Take time being together as a couple. Even though work and homemaking responsibilities are important, it is inexcusable not to spend time together strengthening the marriage relationship.
7. Share healthy recreation and entertainment; enjoy life together.

To achieve a happy marriage, the couple must be convinced that they

can make it happen. Except for the death of a partner, there is no difficulty that cannot be resolved in a Christian marriage relationship. Couples should identify the problems they are facing, agree on their solution, and make a decided effort to address them. Cutting and running is for cowards; failing to be there is for deserters; turning one’s back is the mark of the ungrateful; abandonment is the thankless way out; “there’s nothing we can do about it” is the expression of the ignorant. There is no situation that cannot be overcome when husband and wife are committed to the success of their marriage and present a united front. In complicated cases, the guidance of an experienced Christian marriage counselor will be very valuable. And God is always there to help. (See side bar: “How to have a happy marriage.”)

What about Michael and Jennifer? They made up their minds to be happy, and achieved it. They claim the key to their success is that they spend a lot of time together. They had a bad quarrel a few days after the wedding. Michael decided to leave home. As he was leaving, Jennifer ran out to the car and said, “If you’re leaving me, I’m going with you!” Michael laughed and gave her a hug. Since then, they have learned to love each other “for better or for worse”.

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# OPEN FORUM

## Suicide and the Bible

*One of my best friends recently committed suicide, leaving us all shocked and very sad. What does the Bible say about suicide?*

Suicide is usually defined as the taking of one's own life. The emotional scars left in family and friends are deep, and produce not only feelings of loneliness, but particularly a sense of guilt and disorientation. In providing an answer, I'll have to limit my comments to the following brief observations.

Let's first distinguish between suicide and martyrdom, which is the willingness to surrender our lives for fundamental convictions that we hold to be nonnegotiable, and heroic acts of self-sacrifice that result in the preservation of other lives (for example, a soldier throwing himself or herself on a grenade to save others). While suicide is fundamentally a *denial* of the value of our present life and the final solution to a life perceived as unbearable, those other cases are expressions of *respect* and *love* for life.

I will list the cases of suicide or attempted suicide recorded in the Bible, draw some conclusions, and make some general comments.

1. *Cases of suicide in the Bible:* Abimelech, mortally wounded by a millstone thrown on him by a woman, asked his armor-bearer to kill him to escape shame (Judges 9:54). Saul, after being seriously wounded in battle, killed himself (1 Samuel 31:4). Seeing what the king did, the armor-bearer "fell on his own sword and died with him" (vs. 5, NIV). These deaths were motivated by fear of what the enemy would do to them. Ahithophel, one of King Absalom's counselors, hanged himself after realizing that the king had rejected his advice (2 Samuel

17:23). Zimri became king after a coup d'état, but finding that the people did not support him, he went into "the citadel of the royal palace and set the palace on fire around him," killing himself (1 Kings 16:18, NIV). Judas was so emotionally disturbed after betraying Jesus that he hanged himself (Matthew 27:5). Samson took his own life and that of many prominent enemies by causing the collapse of a building (Judges 16:29, 30). After the earthquake, the Philippian jailer concluded that the prisoners had escaped, and attempted to kill himself out of fear, but Paul persuaded him not to do so (Acts 16:26-28).

2. *Comments on the biblical incidents:* From the incidents listed above, we notice several things: First, most of the suicides took place in the context of war, in which killing oneself is the result of fear or shame.

Second, other cases are more personal and reflect, in addition to fear, a poor self-image, or low self-esteem. All of them take place when the individual is in a highly emotional state of mind.

Third, suicide is mentioned without passing any judgment on the morality of the action. That doesn't mean that it is morally right; it indicates that the biblical writer is simply describing what took place.

The moral impact of suicide is addressed through a biblical understanding of human life: God created it, and we are not the owners to use it and dispose of it as we please. The sixth commandment also has something to say about the topic. Therefore, a Christian should not consider suicide a morally valid solution to the predicament of living in a world where there is physical and emotional pain.

3. *Comments and suggestions:* How then should we relate to the suicide of

a loved one?

First, psychology and psychiatry have revealed that suicide is very often the result of profound emotional upheaval or biochemical imbalances associated with a deep state of depression and fear. We shouldn't pass judgment on the person who has opted for suicide under those circumstances.

Second, God's perfect justice takes into consideration the intense turmoil occurring in our troubled minds; He understands us better than anyone else. We must place the eternal future of our loved ones into His loving hands.

Third, with God's assistance, we can face guilt in a constructive way, keeping in mind that often those who commit suicide needed professional help that most of us were unable to provide.

Finally, if you are ever tempted to commit suicide, there is professional help available, medications that can help you overcome depression, friends who love you and would do all they can to help you, and a God who is willing to work with you and through others to sustain you as you walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Never give up hope!

Angel Manuel Rodriguez (Th.D., Andrews University) is director of the Biblical Research Institute of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.

For an earlier article on this subject, check Judy Cushman, "Suicide: What you should know" (*Dialogue* 9:1, 1997), or log unto our website: <http://dialogue.adventist.org>.

## PROFILES



Yolanda Morales Romero was born in the port city of Veracruz, in the state of Veracruz, Mexico. Her parents were Lucio Morales León and Hilda Romero de Morales. Her father was employed in the port facilities, and her mother devoted her time to home-making and especially to raising her children. She became acquainted with the gospel message when Yolanda was 10 years old. They first attended the Díaz Aragón Adventist Church as visitors and then as members.

In addition to being a certified pre-school teacher, Atty. Morales Romero earned a law degree from the University of Veracruz at the Xalapa campus. She has completed several post-graduate courses and is completing a master's degree in international law. At present, she lives in Mexico City, where she is a judge in civil law.

## Yolanda Morales Romero

### Dialogue with an Adventist judge in Mexico City

■ *How long have you been interested in legal matters? When did you know you were going to be a lawyer?*

I was born to be a lawyer! Since early childhood I said I was going to be a lawyer, which alarmed my mother quite a bit. She thought it wasn't an honorable profession chosen by good people. So she influenced me to become a teacher, perhaps because of unfulfilled dreams of her own. When I graduated from training to be a kindergarten teacher, I handed her my diploma and went on to study law.

■ *Do you have any other degree or specialized training?*

I've taken a number of courses, including a master's degree in international law. I'm currently preparing my thesis, which is a project for Mexico's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

■ *Are these courses related to any particular area?*

Yes, I've specialized in civil law, which has to do with banking, mortgages, deeds, etc.

■ *Tell us about your professional career.*

Upon completing my law studies, I received an award for being the top student in my class. So in 1978, along with other valedictorians from around the country, I visited the president of Mexico. For three days, we were treated by the president with tours and meals and were each given a scholarship to study anywhere in the world.

Having good grades in my law studies opened many doors for me. When I returned to my home state, the Supreme Court of Veracruz offered me a job as assistant judge in the city of Perote. I spent one year there. Then

I took my professional examination and proposed the creation of family courts in the state system, since there were none at the time. My proposal was accepted, and I was given an honorable mention, which opened more doors for me. That honorable mention accompanied my request to the state Supreme Court for a position, and my request was granted. I was sent to the village of Acayucan as recording secretary. Six months later, I was named judge of ordinary jurisdiction. Then I served in the cities of Córdoba, Orizaba, and Coatepec, all in my native state of Veracruz.

At this point I decided I wanted to make use of my scholarship to study international law in Bulgaria. However, when I came to Mexico City to get information to apply, I began to feel very ill. I went to see a doctor, and he sent me home to Veracruz because I had developed a bad case of pneumonia. So I had to cancel my plans to travel to Europe.

■ *What did you do then?*

I decided to try my luck in the capital. I got in touch with people from my home state of Veracruz here in Mexico City. They helped me channel my request, and I was assigned a judgeship in the circuit court. I spent two years there in charge of research and accounting for the magistrate. Then the magistrate died, and his replacement brought with him his own team. Again I contacted some connections, and the Federal District Court opened its doors to me. I took the examination for the position of judge, and thank God I passed. Then I took the specialized examination to become a judge in civil law and won the place

I have held for the last three years. My objective for the near future is to become a magistrate.

■ *How did you come to know Jesus?*

I became acquainted with the Adventist Church at age 10 and was baptized at age 15, largely due to pressure from my mother. At that time my baptism wasn't very meaningful to me, but in spite of it all, the Lord became a powerful force in my life.

For example, I felt God was with me when I went to study law at Xalapa. About that time I heard a sermon in which the pastor dwelt on Jacob's promise to be faithful to God if God would accompany him on his journey. I made that promise my own, that if God would bless me in my studies, I would not go to classes on Sabbath and would attend church. And so it was. Of course, I had problems with examinations scheduled for Friday night. Several teachers made me cry, but I remained faithful.

■ *Have you felt God's presence in your life?*

Yes, especially during some dramatic experiences. When I came down with pneumonia in Mexico City, I felt the Lord was very close to me in a special way. But it was perhaps the failure of my marriage that brought me closest to God. I married a man who did not share my faith. I was very happy with him for a time. When in his right mind, he was a marvelous man; but when he drank, he was a monster. In time, the situation became intolerable, and I decided to part company with him. My first concern then was to look for a job. I asked the Lord to help me, and two days later I was appointed recording secretary in a circuit court. God had answered my prayer.

■ *Being a Christian in the judicial system isn't easy. What can you tell young people who want to study law and be faithful to God?*

I have spoken to the members of

my home church and with teachers from the University at Montemorelos recommending that our institutions of higher learning offer studies leading to degrees in law.

■ *Why?*

A judge determines life's direction for many people. I exercise a function that many consider almost divine.

■ *Please explain.*

It's my job to judge men and women. That's a great responsibility.

■ *Do you feel a connection with God in your work?*

Of course. I ask God every day to guide me. I feel that I'm His representative. As judges, we carry the weight of the world on our shoulders. Life, liberty, money, position in life—are all dependent on the decisions that we as judges make. For example, the cases of corruption that occur, and they do occur, are very serious, and we are called upon to bring justice, regardless of the people involved. That's very important.

For those reasons I believe our Adventist universities should offer legal training. There should be judges in whom we can trust and have confidence that their decisions will be guided by God.

In the courts where I have served, we read a morning devotional. I ask for God's blessing and we get to work. How wonderful it would be if we had an Adventist judge in every court! Unfortunately, in the mind of some people the term "lawyer" is synonymous with "corrupt person." But that's not true. One time a medical doctor called me "gangster lawyer." I answered that if he had any basis for his accusation or any specific charge against me that he should provide the evidence and denounce me.

■ *You've had a successful career as a student and a professional and have overcome in emotional crises in your life.*

*What do you have to say to Adventist university students pursuing a law degree?*

If you want to be a lawyer, go for it! Put your hand in God's so your decisions will be just and in harmony with the principles of law. In the corrupt world in which we live, we have to swim against the current, but the rewards are deeply satisfying. If we persist in thinking that becoming a lawyer is to be lost, the world will lose the blessings that God wants to bestow through us.

■ *What habits do you consider important for professionals?*

The habit of continuing study and in-service education. Law and medicine, among other fields, are constantly changing and we need to update our skills all the time.

■ *Do you have any further thoughts for the readers of Dialogue?*

In everything you do, stay close to God, and He will richly bless you.

## Interview by César Maya Montes

César Maya Montes is editor-in-chief of GEMA EDITORES, the Seventh-day Adventist publishing house in Mexico. He is presently completing a doctoral degree in human behavior. His email: [direccion@enfoqueonline.com](mailto:direccion@enfoqueonline.com).

## PROFILES



Ambassador Paki (left) with Jonathan Gallagher.

His Excellency Evan Jeremy Paki was formally accredited as Ambassador of Papua New Guinea to the United States on September 8, 2003. At 30 years of age, he is the youngest diplomat to serve as head of mission in the diplomatic service of his country. He is a lawyer, a scholar, and an active member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Mr. Paki comes from the Enga Province in the Highlands Region of Papua New Guinea. He studied at a Lutheran primary school, and after finishing high school received a scholarship from the government of Australia to study in Brisbane. Returning to his homeland, he earned a law degree from the University of Papua New Guinea and was admitted to the bar in 1996.

The following year Mr. Paki received a Fulbright Scholarship to study at Harvard Law School from which he received an L.L.M. (Master's) degree in 1998. He worked at the World Bank's Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency in Washington, D.C., and then joined the international law firm of Baker and McKenzie in Sydney, Australia.

At the end of 2001, Mr. Paki returned to his homeland and in March

## Evan Jeremy Paki

Dialogue with the ambassador of Papua New Guinea to the United States, Canada, and Mexico

2003 was appointed Ambassador to the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

*Dialogue* interviewed Ambassador Evan Jeremy Paki at the Embassy of Papua New Guinea in Washington, D.C.

■ *Ambassador, tell us how your faith has influenced you in your career.*

When I reflect on how God has led my life in the past and how He continues to lead, I have assurance and my trust in Him grows. When everyone around you is frantic, you can remain confident in God. As ambassador for my country, I carry an enormous responsibility and believe that God works through circumstances.

For example, at meetings of heads of missions or at other high-level meetings, when I specify, "No wine, please," I am asked questions as to why I don't drink. This gives me opportunity to talk about my lifestyle and the reasons for it. I don't want to be seen as a religious fanatic, but in the case of alcohol, there are plenty of health and safety issues that are very compelling. And one can start an interesting conversation on deeper issues from that perspective.

■ *How do you describe your picture of God?*

It's a question of relationship. One hears movie stars and TV personalities talk about some divine force or power in the universe, and they have a right to their opinions. But for me, God is not some kind of impersonal force out there—He is a real Person and my relationship with Him is very important. God is a friend, partner, and counselor. He helps me find a sense

of direction when faced with perplexing issues and policy decisions. God is always there to help, for the bigger the problem, the bigger the challenge.

■ *Did you grow up in a religious family?*

The members of my family were Lutherans, but my mother brought us into the Adventist Church when I was little. I am the second in a family of six boys. My older brother is an accountant, the third is an Adventist minister, the fourth is in medical school, the fifth is studying economics, and the youngest is studying in the United States. At first, my father objected to our becoming Seventh-day Adventists, but now he attends an Adventist congregation and plans to be baptized later this year.

■ *Under what circumstances were you appointed ambassador?*

The Papua New Guinea Parliament consists of 109 members, representing the 20 provinces of our country. In July, 1999, the members of parliament elected a new prime minister. Some of members whom I had been advising became members of the new government that came into power. Because of the previous contacts I had had with the United States and international agencies, as well as the skills and abilities they saw in me, I was appointed ambassador to the U.S. and its two neighboring countries.

■ *What kind of work is involved in your assignment?*

First, there is all the diplomatic work involved in representing my country's interests in the United States, including all bilateral and multilateral dealings. Then, there are the negotiations

with international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. We are also engaged with the U.S. business community to promote investment and trade opportunities in our country. As head of the Papua New Guinea mission in Washington, D.C., I also serve as ambassador to Canada and Mexico. Once we agree on a schedule with the respective governments, I will present my diplomatic credentials to the leaders of those countries.

■ *Do you write your own speeches?*

Yes, I do, and those of others, too! My role is to be aware of a given situation, to give the best advice, and in general to provide assistance to my ministers and the government. For example, in the last few months I traveled to Colombia with the deputy prime minister of my country for an international conference. I also went to Hawaii with the minister for foreign affairs for a meeting of Pacific Island leaders (which was also attended by the U.S. President) and accompanied him to the United Nations General Assembly. One needs to know the issues, do research, brief the visiting minister, and generally play an advisory role.

■ *Do you have to deal with situations in which people consider you too young to hold such important responsibilities?*

The issue of youth works both ways. Some may say I don't have much diplomatic experience, but when they get to know me, they begin to see things differently. The fact that I have studied and worked in other countries has given me valuable experience. At the same time, some members of the Parliament in my country are fairly young, around my age. I don't see my age as a handicap at all!

■ *Why did you decide to accept this appointment?*

It is a public service assignment. I don't look at it as an opportunity to

be financially rewarded, but to have the satisfaction of serving my country. I was earning more as a banking and finance lawyer in Sydney, working for an American law firm. But as long as I'm here, I will put all my effort to be a good ambassador for Papua New Guinea.

■ *Would you encourage Adventist young people to consider a similar career?*

I would tell young people, "Consider giving some years of your life to service." It is an action-packed assignment, not a bureaucracy. It is an opportunity to accomplish something valuable, to reach a definite set of goals, and leave a legacy behind.

The principle of serving others is essential. I have received several visits of former U.S. Peace Corps volunteers who served in Papua New Guinea. Two or three years of service there have transformed their lives. I've also met church members who have been volunteers through Adventist Frontier Missions assignments in remote areas of my country and they also reported a rewarding experience. I encourage others to give such service.

■ *How do you see our church relating to governments and international bodies—the United Nations, for example?*

I believe we have to interact more with governments and international agencies. There are important needs in our world, and we can contribute much in areas such as education, health, and religious freedom. As Adventists, we are looking for a better world to come, but we are still in this world with all its needs that we can alleviate. By responding to those needs, we pave the way for presenting the gospel message.

■ *You're currently single. Are you considering marriage?*

I haven't seriously thought about it. In many ways, not being married makes my job easier. For example, if I'm needed somewhere, I can just pack

up at a moment's notice and leave for the airport, without having to worry about wife and kids. It is not that I would not like to be married; it's just something I haven't contemplated yet and haven't taken active steps toward.

■ *Any final thoughts you wish to share with our readers?*

Yes. There are more than 230,000 baptized members in the Papua New Guinea Union Mission, and if one adds the children and friends, we have almost half a million in our Adventist circle. But the needs are many, both within the church and in society at large. I would like to hear from people with skills who are willing to contribute to the work of the church in my country, especially in education and health, as well as in evangelism. And also from professional people who would like to help in other ways. I can be contacted at epaki@pngembassy.org. Thank you!

## Interview by Jonathan Gallagher

Jonathan Gallagher (Ph.D., University of St. Andrews) is an associate director in the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. He also serves as the church's liaison with the United Nations. His mailing address: 12501 Old Columbia Pike; Silver Spring, Maryland 20904; U.S.A.

## Transforming prayer

by Costin Jordache

I wish I could say I have always been a great man of prayer. The truth is that prayer was one of those things I grew up with: You're a Christian, so you pray. But challenging situations in recent years had made my understanding of prayer crumble beneath me, and I began to want to understand it better. It's difficult to define what prayer is precisely. One anonymous author states, "Prayer's ultimate goal—if, indeed, it has others—is to close the gap between us and God."

But more specifically, What does prayer do? To gain perspective, let's look into the life of a character in this drama we call the Bible, Jonah. His story is well known. Jonah was a prophet who lived around 700 B.C. God commissions him to walk into the capital city of Assyria, Israel's arch-enemy, to declare its destruction.

Without a word, Jonah gets on a boat and heads not to Nineveh, but to Tarshish. Most biblical historians indicate that Tarshish was in Spain, more than 2,000 miles west of Nineveh. Jonah is literally running to the ends of his known world!

God provides a violent storm to remind Jonah of his mission. As a last resort, the sailors agree to toss Jonah overboard because Jonah insists he is the problem. The storm subsides as Jonah sinks to the bottom and is swallowed by a large fish that is his cocoon for the next three days. A reluctant, rebellious Jonah enters that fish, but something dramatic happens inside it—the beginning of a metamorphosis, a transformation.

We pick up the story in Jonah 2:1: "From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. He said: 'In my distress I called to the Lord, and

he answered me. From the depths of the grave I called for help, and you listened to my cry. You hurled me into the deep, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me. I said, "I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple." The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But you brought my life up from the pit, O Lord my God. When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs. But I, with a song of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the Lord'" (NIV).

A reluctant but revived Jonah utters a prayer, a heartfelt plea with God, that marks the beginning of his transformation.

There are three remarkable qualities in Jonah's supplication, three ways that our prayers can lead to personal transformation.

### First, he knows who he is talking to

In Jonah 1:8, as the violent storm is raging, the sailors begin to interrogate Jonah: "Who is responsible for making all this trouble for us?... From what people are you?" Jonah replies, "I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land."

To understand the transformation

we must understand the transformer. Jonah might be angry and confused, but he has not lost sight of who God is. As he begins his prayer, he knows that he is approaching the Sovereign God: "From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God."

If our prayers have become weak, ineffective, or ritualistic, it might be because we have forgotten who we are talking to. In an effort to remove fear, we have emphasized Abba, the "Heavenly Daddy" to the detriment of the other side of the coin. The writer of Hebrews ends Chapter 12 saying, "Our God is a consuming fire."

What if the president of your country chose five people at random to come into his executive office, one by one for 15 minutes, and you were one of them? You are told that during this time alone with him you can say or ask anything!

As you enter, would you quickly say, "Mr. President, thank you for keeping our country safe and the economy running well. Continue to watch over all of us and please ensure that there will be enough money in the social security fund for my retirement. Goodby?"

Just change some words, address them to God, and you'll hear many of our prayers in this fast-paced world. Some of us have lost sight of the reality of God, who is both Abba and consuming fire.

A friend of Martin Luther's once recalled: "I overheard him in prayer... It was with so much reverence, as if he were speaking to God, yet with so much confidence as if he were speaking to his friend." Another author penned these words, "If we would only stop to realize that in this privileged

moment of prayer, the Creator of the Universe is willing to listen to us, to talk with us, to grant us His undivided attention for as long as we desire, our spiritual lives would be transformed.”

Jonah knows who he is talking to, enough so that he prays in the past tense even though he’s still in the pit!

### **Second, in praying, he is honest with God**

There are several forms of the word prayer in Hebrew, with various connotations. Among them is *palal*, used in Jonah 2:1, whose primary definition is “to intervene, to throw oneself in the middle of.” The same Hebrew word is used when the Israelites beg Moses to pray that God remove the deadly serpents.

This is an intense form of prayer. Someone once said, “Every Christian should pray at least one violent prayer every day,” and this is exactly the type of prayer that Jonah prayed. He enters into a brutally honest dialogue with God, throwing himself at His mercy, confessing that he deserves to be hurled into a stormy sea, and that he believes himself banished from God’s sight. He even talks about being wrapped up in sticky, stinky seaweed!

In a passage from Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Huck is having a crisis of conscience. Here are his words (along with his grammar): “I about made up my mind to pray, and see if I couldn’t try to quit being the kind of a boy I was and be better. So I kneeled down. But the words wouldn’t come....It warn’t no use to try and hide it from Him [speaking of God]. Nor from me, neither. I knowed very well why they wouldn’t come. It was because my heart warn’t right.... deep down in me I knowed it was a lie, and He knowed it. You can’t pray a lie—I found that out.”

Jonah had lived a lie to this point, but in a moment of catharsis, he bares his soul in honest dialogue with God.

### **Third, he commits himself to a course of action**

This is my favorite part of this prayer. Remember Jonah 2:9, “What I have vowed I will make good.” Jonah ends his prayer by committing himself to a course of action. He does not put the ball in God’s court, hoping for an answer. I have trouble with the mentality that says because it is impossible to live up to standards of the law, I must pray, “God I am nothing, I can do nothing, so I ask you to do it.” At times, there is merit and biblical support for that sort of prayer, but too often it is just an excuse. We slump into the complacency of waiting for God to act, conveniently getting us off the hook. We say, “God, I’ve prayed, you know where to find me! Amen.”

Jonah is taking proactive steps to redirect his life: “Lord, I know who I am and who I want to be. I’m taking the first step in that direction.” These are not token steps to ensure an answered prayer; they are fundamental shifts in thinking that result in transformed actions. That is one of the most powerful effects of prayer!

Jonah, son of Amittai, rebellious, confused, and frightened is now alive, focused, and fearless, and he’s still swimming around in the belly of a fish! Nineteenth century author George Meredith said it plainly, “Who rises from prayer a better man, his prayer is answered.”

### **Conclusion**

I am not saying there is instantaneous and permanent transformation. Jonah commits and follows through, but then blows it again. His understanding of God’s character and of his own mission is still limited. When the Ninevites believe and repent, Jonah gets angry, thinking both he and God will now look weak because destruction will not come. Transformation is both a daily choice and the work of a lifetime.

According to God’s Word and Jonah’s testimony, if you feel distressed,

buried alive, doubtful, dissatisfied with who you are with your spiritual life, you have access to a vehicle that can move you to a new place. Prayer is your transportation to transformation.

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## **Let’s Talk!**

Do you want to send a comment or a question to Pastor Jan Paulsen, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church? You can do it through a website:

<http://www.letstalk.adventist.org>

The website’s goal is to foster communication between young Adventists around the world and the office of the General Conference President. You’ll also find useful links and a searchable database of questions and answers on many topics at the same site. Check it out!

# FIRST PERSON

## In a prison cell: A matter of conscience

by Stanley Maxwell, as told by Robert Huang

*After the Communists liberated Shanghai in 1949, the government was more interested in rooting out corruption than in planting Communist Party ideology. While it was rounding up “capitalist dogs,” prostitutes, gangsters, and drug offenders, it was too busy to worry about religion. In fact, proselytizing, while officially banned, was not only permitted, but encouraged, and naturally, Christianity spread. In the early 1950s, the Seventh-day Adventist Church became Shanghai’s fastest growing denomination. During the 1950s and 1960s, a young man named Robert Huang, son of an American-born Chinese, joined Adventism and entered the ministry.*

*Not long after Chairman Mao Zedong ushered Shanghai down the socialist road, the government cracked down on “superstition.” Unfortunately, other Christians, jealous of the Adventist Church growth, encouraged the Party to allow the Adventists to initiate the Accusation Movement in the city. Sadly, spouses began accusing each other and members denounced their leaders.*

*A little persecution strengthens the church, but too much can destroy it. After a while, all denominations died out almost completely in Shanghai. Many Adventist leaders compromised with the government on even fundamental matters of belief and practice, like breaking the Sabbath, the fourth commandment in Exodus 20. To Huang’s dismay, these leaders demanded that he follow their example. He refused and was shunned by his fellow clergy. Here is his testimony.*

Adventism became a church led by fewer and fewer pastors as they were arrested one by one. I became one of the last, if not the last, Adventist pastor able to minister to the remaining Adventists in Shanghai. Because pros-

elytizing was illegal in the new China, I went underground, secretly conducting private services in church members’ homes, beside hospital beds, or on park benches. I soon became a marked man and was followed by members of the secret police. In 1964, I was arrested and without trial was thrown in jail. When I remained unwilling to confess to crimes I had never committed, the guards told me to cooperate or sit on the floor until it rotted. I had one consolation: When I explained to the guards that Seventh-day Adventists follow the diet in Leviticus restricting unclean meats, especially pork, they granted my request for Muslim halal food.

While awaiting my sentence, I looked for opportunities to witness. I needed a Bible, but Bibles were illegal in prison. The story of how I got a pocket English Bible is a miracle. You can read about how it happened in an earlier issue of *Dialogue* [“The hidden Bible,” 14:3, 2002]. Hiding the Bible within the pages of Chairman Mao’s *Quotations*, I secretly taught my cell mates about God.

I might have been able to continue witnessing had I not decided to try to tell the outside world about my success. Because my family had been able to slip a Bible past the guards, I believed I could clandestinely pass my story to them. They had hidden the Bible in a bar of soap, so I hid my story in a medicine bottle. Sadly, I was caught slipping the bottle into my sister’s hand. Now the guards had evidence against me, and I was selected for torture.

After months of being forced to stand in contorted positions for hours while being slapped, beaten, and kicked by fellow inmates, my health weakened. Then the guards began testing me by altering my menu, serving me rice with pork, a food I had given up for biblical reasons

when I became an Adventist. At first I fasted, but when I began coughing, I knew my tuberculosis was returning.

Every day my fellow inmates yelled, “Join New China! Leave your superstition behind!” Their cries beat against my soul even harder than the blows that struck my flesh. Outwardly I stood firm, but inwardly I doubted. Should I compromise? I worried about my health. If I didn’t eat, I would grow weaker. Surely God didn’t want me to suffer from tuberculosis needlessly. Wouldn’t God want me to do everything in my power to be healthy and strong? Eating pork was no mortal sin, I thought. It wasn’t like breaking one of the commandments. I cannot be saved by works, but by faith in Jesus Christ. Aren’t clean thoughts more important to God than clean meat? If I ate the pork, I reasoned, my mind would be clearer, and I’d be better able to resist my daily torment.

The next day, fearing that I might die of tuberculosis and lacking the faith to believe that God had a thousand ways to deliver me, I ate pork. Chinese love pork, and I’m no exception. It tasted wonderful in my mouth, but it was soon bitter in my stomach. My wishful idea that prison life would be easier after compromising proved terribly wrong. Having seen me take one step in their direction, my tormentors relentlessly prodded me to take another. I wanted to quit eating pork, but the guards kept serving it to me. Having once gone against my conscience, I found it nearly impossible to ask the guards to change my diet. I tried to tell them, “Adventists don’t eat pork,” but they sneered, “You’re not Muslim. That diet is served to our Muslim prisoners. You eat pork!” Soon I was eating it regularly and thinking nothing of it.

My tormentors forced me to read lists of prisoners who’d been executed. Many

were Christians. I took it to mean, “If you don’t change, you’ll face the firing squad, too!” I worried about my Bible. If it were discovered, the guards would know that my family had smuggled it to me. Suffering daily, I momentarily forgot that if God could keep the guards from finding it when it was smuggled in, He could prevent them from discovering it now. Instead, I feared that if it were found, my family would be arrested. Wanting to protect them, I determined to be rid of my precious Bible. You can learn more of its fate in the book *Prisoner for Christ*.

Not long after I’d solved my problem with the Bible, I was walking down the prison hall trying to forget my cellmate’s daily demands that I give up my God. As I turned toward my cell, I saw a former inmate with whom I had once studied the Bible. He yelled, “You’re not a true Christian, Robert. If you were, you wouldn’t be eating pork!”

On the one hand, I was happy because he had remembered the biblical dietary principles I had shared with him, but his harsh judgment informed me that I was being closely observed. Eating pork had reduced my credibility and thus my influence. The Apostle Paul had said that eating food offered to idols was no sin, but he had worried about the influence it had upon weaker church members. I didn’t want to be responsible for an inmate’s spiritual downfall simply because I ate pork. I decided to request a new menu, but procrastinated.

Six months after my torture sessions began, they ended—almost as abruptly as they had begun. I remained unrepentant, except on the matter of pork. As I struggled with my conscience, I found it impossible to witness. As long as I behaved contrary to my convictions, I had neither the will to teach about Jesus, nor to be a Daniel and request simple vegetables. I mustered up the courage to ask for simple vegetables occasionally, but was rebuked. “You ate pork before, what’s wrong with it now?” the guards yelled contemptuously. Still

weak in faith, I would eat it again, and soon I quit asking.

When my family visited me one day, I learned that my younger brother had been arrested because he was a doctor and a Christian. It heartened me to know he was standing up for his beliefs. Back in my cell, I felt ashamed. How could I face him? How could I say, “It was too hard for me in prison, so, under pressure, I compromised”? I should be an example, yet a fellow inmate felt I hadn’t only failed my younger brother, I had also failed in my witness. My example was shouting louder than my words. I concluded that sometimes a person’s life is the best sermon, and decided that with God’s help, I’d preach it with my might!

The next time pork was served, with God’s help, I refused it, asking for simple food. At first the guards were uncooperative. In time, when they saw that I meant what I said, they stopped serving me pork. With my new diet, I felt that my spiritual strength also increased. Having won my battle with my conscience, I sensed God’s presence near me in prison. Growing ever closer to God, I felt bold enough to witness again. Soon, with God’s help, I brought a thief to Christ.

In 1979, I was released from prison, was reinstated, and reissued a ministerial license. I took a trip to the newly opened American Embassy in Beijing and was permitted to emigrate to the U.S. Today I travel the world sharing my story, witnessing to Chinese everywhere.

Stanley Maxwell teaches at Lake Michigan College in South Haven, Michigan. He is the author of *The Man Who Couldn’t Be Killed* and *The Man Who Lived Twice*. For more about Robert Huang, read his latest book, *Prisoner for Christ*. The books may be purchased online at [www.maxwellsgiftsandbooks.com](http://www.maxwellsgiftsandbooks.com). He is currently working on his fourth book.

## Brazil...

Continued from page 35.

evaluate the factors that influence their development, and to explore their commitment to the Adventist Church.

Israel Alves Souza, a law student at Sao Paulo State University, reflected on the pressures on Adventist students in public institutions. “This event convinced me that I need to reveal my Christian identity at the very beginning of the academic year, both in my classes and in my social relations. Otherwise, I run the risk that others won’t realize that I have different convictions and standards.”

Felipe Cardoso, from the State of Parana, said that the symposium helped him understand he isn’t alone in his struggles. Osmar Reis Jr., pursuing a degree in psychology in Brasilia, agreed and added, “When you face difficulties in the public university campus, you feel alone and under pressure. But when you attend a meeting like this one, you’re encouraged to discover that there are many other Adventist students facing similar challenges.”

One of the event highlights was the Friday evening premiere performance of the musical “The Saviour,” involving 350 singers, five soloists, and an orchestra. The musical, created and produced by three Adventist composers, focuses on God’s love for His children.

University vice president Paulo Martini indicated that the institution plans to expand the event, inviting Adventist university students from all the fields of the Central Brazil Union. “This type of program is valuable for them and we’re committed to strengthening their spiritual life and witness.”

# FOR YOUR INFORMATION

## Seventh-day Adventists and Scholarship

During 2002-2004, the Adventist Church leadership convened a series of international conferences on faith and science involving scientists, theologians, and church leaders. In preparation for the final conference, a representative group was asked to draft a statement on "Seventh-day Adventists and Scholarship."\* The document was presented and discussed during the conference held in Denver, Colorado in August 2004. The text below incorporates the suggestions made and is provided to *Dialogue* readers for study and reflection.

### Definition and scope

Christian scholarship is the faithful and responsible use of our talents and skills in systematic investigation of God's self-revelation, his creation, and expressions of human creativity, for the good of the church and humanity.

Scholarship works on the theoretical and applied levels. It involves the dimensions of discovery, integration, application, teaching and dissemination.<sup>1</sup> As such, Christian scholarship expands and deepens understanding of knowledge and the way knowledge impacts living in God's world. It explains the world and adds new knowledge, helping enlighten where there is confusion or contradiction. It raises new questions, which provide impetus for new discoveries. It identifies problems and moves towards their resolution. It is creative, seeking to engage the imagination in developing and responding to artistic works, as well as initiating new avenues of exploration.

Scholars approach their work analytically, strategically and/or empathetically. Analytic scholarship focuses on ideas, disassembling and reassembling some aspect of reality. This requires an inevitable distance between the scholar

and the subject of study. The strategic approach focuses on action, looking at the world in order to change it, to solve problems. Where the empathetic approach is used, the scholar seeks to understand and explore human experience and creativity from within. These approaches are rarely exclusive, often operating together and complementing each other.<sup>2</sup>

### Historical perspective on Christian and Adventist scholarship

Scholarship has a strong tradition in the Christian Church. The apostle Paul, through the depth and cohesiveness of his theological thought, gave the Christian Church an excellent example of how faith and scholarly thought enrich each other. With many others from different faith perspectives, Augustine, Erasmus, Luther, Tyndale, and Wesley all recognized the importance of scholarship to exploration of truth. Protestantism was rooted in biblical study, and gained impetus by the Renaissance emphasis on returning to original sources. Throughout history, spiritual revivals have occurred at times of quests for fresh understanding of truth. Intellectual pursuit and scholarship in the Christian Church have primarily focused on theological thought; however, this is not to the exclusion of valuing scholarship that more widely explores the created world and the Creator's gifts.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church itself emerged from a quest for truth—a scholarly enterprise—and the early years were characterized by dialogue and scholarly discourse. The church sought to first define and then refine doctrine through, for example, the Sabbath conferences that commenced in the 1840s. The post-1863 *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* engaged

comfortably with original sources, using Greek and Hebrew to explore present truth. The typical approach was disciplined, logical, and biblical. Scholarly endeavors did not stop with theology. Interest soon expanded into the health sciences—the application of discovery to quality of life. It is not surprising that Adventists were soon recognized for their focus on health foods (Kellogg), the development of the largest press in Michigan, and for the establishment of institutions of higher education.

Similar to the wider Christian community, Adventist pioneers saw intellectual development as a responsibility of believers. The Seventh-day Adventist Church of the 21st century owes its theology, its large and growing educational system, and its wide involvement in health and medical work to an inheritance that saw scholarship, faith commitment and mission as inseparable responsibilities for committed seekers of God's will.

### Assumptions of Christian scholarship

The importance of scholarship to the Christian is based on assumptions that arise from the biblical view of the nature of God, the nature and purpose of humankind and the nature and value of knowledge.

*The nature of God:* God is the creator and sustainer of the universe and life, who reveals himself to humanity and seeks to be known by his created beings. God himself has ultimate knowledge (Isaiah 55: 8, 9) and desires knowledge, an expression of his character, for humanity (Psalm 19:1). He intends for humanity to reach for the highest possible standards of excellence in this world, and enjoy a future of continued growth of knowledge in the next.

*The nature and purpose of humankind:* Original creation was very good, but the world that humans experience is no longer perfect; we are required to make choices for good or evil. Nevertheless, the world remains intelligible to the human mind, if in more limited form, and guided by God, humans can arrive at truth. When the human mind is brought into contact with the mind of God, the human mind is inevitably expanded and developed. This development will mirror God's image in humankind; it will continue to be a defining relationship between humanity and the Creator through eternity.

*The nature and value of knowledge:* Due to our living in a fallen world, all knowledge is not in itself morally good, or complete. However, living in faith and expansion of the mind are not in opposition to each other—indeed they support and enrich each other, and there will always be more valuable knowledge to attain. Within the context of a Christian life, knowledge becomes meaningful when the mind is transformed through the experience of faith (Romans 12:2) and an individual is open to the leading of the Holy Spirit, who God promises will guide His followers “into all truth” (John 16:13). Ultimate knowledge is a saving knowledge of God (John 17:3).

### **The responsibility to engage in scholarship**

The assumptions that lie behind scholarship make it a vital part of the Adventist Christian experience. Scholarship, the natural extension of a thoughtful life, helps us be more fully human. This is a reason for scholarship in itself. The joy of learning and discovery in a climate of freedom, and responding to the God-given quest for truth are not only positive motivators for engaging in intellectual discovery, they are a responsibility for believing Christians.

There is another reason for Adventists to engage in scholarship. At its

best, scholarship keeps truth fresh, pushing the frontiers of knowledge. Scholarship analyzes and strengthens what is already partially understood, looks for interrelations between and within areas of knowledge, and searches for new patterns of thought and knowledge that will increase understanding. Thus, scholarship also becomes a means of enriching and expanding the perspectives of the church and the way the church communicates and relates its messages. In all it does, Christian scholarship seeks to explain and make attractive the beauty that exists in God. For Adventist scholars, distinctive doctrines such as creation, eschatology and the mortality of humankind will be reflected in their worldview and will provide a unique context to their intellectual pursuits. The meta-narrative of the great controversy and the holistic approach to life espoused by the Seventh-day Adventist Church will inevitably inform their approaches to scholarship. In this way, scholarship helps articulate doctrine and the Adventist worldview in understandable and relevant ways.

The responsibilities of a Christian and the objectives of scholarship also intersect on another very practical level: human need. Through their research, Adventist scholars can make God's world more understandable and improve human life in the present. This can be by contributing to the beauty of the world, or through investigations that bring health, healing and improvement to human society. By this means scholarship becomes an avenue of service, a way of immediately responding to the challenges of a fallen world.

### **Attitudes and approaches to scholarship**

Whether or not scholarship meets its own intrinsic ideals is largely dependent on the attitudes of scholars and the way they approach their work.

To be successful in study and its

application, Adventist scholars first need to be inquisitive, open to exploring the world through their innate gift of curiosity. God invites this attitude of inquiry. Christian scholarship should never be less rigorous because it is Christian. An Adventist engaged in scholarship should seek excellence and be persistent in delving into issues, even those that appear to be irresolvable. Since more knowledge is always attainable, scholars should be innovative, looking for new methodologies, new solutions.

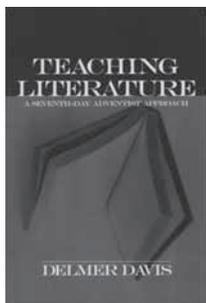
Yet this attitude of inquiry should be partnered with humility, the recognition that in an imperfect world our human discoveries will remain tentative and incomplete. God's wisdom is not complete in any one individual and only by openness, a willingness to collaborate and an attitude of teachability can scholars advance truth. Adventist scholars need to truly appreciate the views of others, and be willing to modify their own views as participants in the community of Adventist scholars.

An Adventist scholar will approach peers with a spirit of generosity and respect, mirroring the generosity with which God approaches us. Such an attitude will be seen in a willingness to listen and honestly consider the views of others and an approach to learning and scholarly endeavors that assumes the value of all individuals and of the created world.

Scholarship will take place in the Seventh-day Adventist Church for many good reasons. However, it is understood that church entities may prioritize resources for scholarly work that advances the church's mission. This will not mean work that is solely theological; it does mean that scholars should consider how their work might serve not just their personal interests, but also those of the wider faith community. It also means that scholarly work should not rely on approaches

Continued on page 33.

# BOOKS



**Teaching Literature:  
A Seventh-day Adventist  
Approach,**

by Delmer Davis (Berrien Springs,  
Michigan: Andrews University Press,  
2002; 100 pp., paperback).

Reviewed by  
Wilma McClarty

Adventist teachers of literature have long debated what should be taught in their discipline and how it should be related to their faith. Davis attempts to provide an answer to this dilemma. His book stimulates discussion by raising issues and synthesizing responses, with special emphasis on contemporary literary challenges.

Starting with a discussion of what is literature and why should it be read, Davis documents varied reactions to both questions, beginning with the view that literature provides pleasure and enlightens readers' ability to more clearly see their life and times. Next, he moves to a discussion of literary theories and canon issues, analyzing literary approaches, different philosophies about how art is created, and the relationship of a literary work to both reader and author. The discussion leads him to conclude, "In the end, then, a Christian approach to literature cannot be seen as totally separate from other approaches" (p. 41).

The section dealing with Ellen White and literature argues that while she "specifically condemns fiction-reading and theatrical performances, she also writes certain balancing statements that provide support for what teachers of literature attempt to accomplish in the classroom" (p. 46). The author then references some key Adventist literary critics and deals with teaching of the Bible as literature. A discussion of literary criticism and the Adventist Church follows.

Examples, summaries, and analyses cement the book into a unified whole, although Davis' ambitious purpose might suggest otherwise. That he did the research needed to share accurate but brief introductions to major literary theories and critics is evident throughout. The book is readable and informative—a commendable combination that provides a solid base in this one slim volume to ensure informed discussions about Christian literary issues.

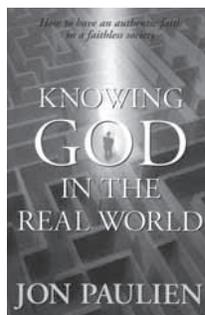
Davis provides a very helpful recommended reading list with more than 30 annotated suggestions. Perhaps the author should have included two other books: *Rainbows for the Fallen World* by Calvin Seerveld and *Literature Through the Eyes of Faith* by Susan Gallagher and Roger Lundin. The book ends with an appendix, *A Guide to the Teaching of*

*Literature in Seventh-day Adventist Schools*, prepared by the General Conference Department of Education in 1971.

Although Davis takes his examples mostly from British or American literature, the issues discussed apply to any culture's literature. The book's relevance exceeds what the title suggests, the content being applicable to all Christian literature teachers and to all Christian readers who want a base for selecting. Although the preface acknowledges that "this book is meant to be introductory, however, and does not provide final answers," the author stresses his wish that the book will "provide a basis upon which further conversations can take place."

I recommend the book highly to both those who love literature and those who teach it. Davis' call for a "positive and coherent literary theory or movement that can stand shoulder to shoulder with other competing theories" (p. 99) is appropriate and timely. Let the conversations begin.

Wilma McClarty (Ed.D., University of Montana) chairs the Department of English at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee, U.S.A. Email: [wmcclarty@southern.edu](mailto:wmcclarty@southern.edu).



**Knowing God  
in the Real World,**  
by Jon Paulien (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific  
Press Publ. Assn. 2001; 160 pp.;  
paperback).

Reviewed by  
Raúl Esperante

When a writer combines an understanding of human attitudes in everyday matters, his psychological background, and a deep concern about how to achieve fullness in life, the result is a great book on how to become successful in faith and in life. This is a book about spiritual attitudes in real life, about how to experience a deep transformation in our daily habits in order to achieve personal excellence. But above all, is a book about being just who you are...in God.

Jon Paulien, a New Testament scholar who teaches at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan, really hits the nail on the head as he brings the issue of salvation to a personal level. The book starts with an analysis of how we see ourselves, how we feel about ourselves ("self-worth strategies") and the implications on achieving success and relationships.

This section allows readers to see themselves from the

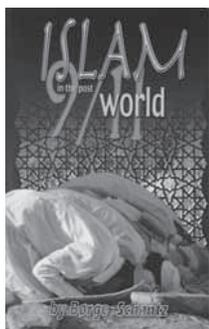
outside and encourages them to seek out those characteristics that are valuable in the search for real life. That real life, called “authenticity” by the author, is the theme of the rest of the book. It is achieved by first recognizing that we cannot do anything by ourselves, but only through God.

Salvation is not attained, but given by grace; therefore, we don’t have to worry about fulfilling requisites or meeting goals of perfection. We just need to “practice faith” (Chapter 2). How do we do that? Paulien brings up the usual topic: Real, active faith and life are found in God through meaningful prayer, in-depth Bible study, and sharing. What makes his suggestions truly useful is that he goes beyond superficial solutions and gives practical ideas on how to achieve those goals.

In the final two chapters, the author writes at length on prayer, the benefits associated with intercessory prayer, and how to overcome barriers to prayer life in order to attain the goal of authenticity. Paulien indicates that a lack of authenticity destroys our self-esteem, our spiritual growth, our relationships, our finances, and even our health, and goes on to propose five simple steps to authenticity.

Those who seek a more profound relationship with the Giver of faith and salvation while still playing the real game of life will find this book a source of ideas and reflection.

Raúl Esperante (Ph.D., Loma Linda University) is a scientist at the Geoscience Research Institute, Loma Linda, California, U.S.A. Email: [resperante@univ.llu.edu](mailto:resperante@univ.llu.edu).



**Islam in the Post 9/11 World,** by Borge Schantz (Alma Park, Grantham, Lincs., England: Autumn House, 2004; 164 pp.; paperback).

Reviewed by  
Patrick J. Boyle

Christianity and Islam account for nearly half of the world’s population. Their interaction has produced bitter and prolonged conflict, especially during the Crusades of the medieval period. The terrorist attacks in New York, Washington, D.C., and Madrid have sharply focused the differences between Islam, Christianity, and secular society. The invasion of Iraq, the Arab/Israeli conflict, and the continuing war against terrorism have heightened tensions between Islam and the West. Roughly a quarter of all of Muslims,

around 300 million, live in Africa and the West; this suggests the situation is not going to disappear.

Schantz explains in clear and direct prose what is involved in being a Muslim: What Muslims believe and how their faith influences their lifestyle. He details where and how they differ from Christians. He addresses the many challenges and difficulties that Muslims face living in the West as well as the Western nations’ attempts to achieve peaceful co-existence.

The author offers insights on the difficulties that fundamentalist Muslims face in adapting to Western culture and laws. The harsh measures imposed on Muslims by the Shari’ah law in resolving the problems they encounter in the relaxed, promiscuous Western society, and in their dealing with backslidden Muslims are carefully examined.

Schantz calls for a Christian attitude toward Muslims. His appeal is to avoid both the hateful demonizing and the indifferent attitudes that many adopt. He emphasizes that prejudice against a person because of race, color of skin, language, or religion is un-Christian and beneath the dignity of all. However, to witness to one’s faith, pointing out fundamental differences, is a Christian responsibility, which should not be compromised. Islam and Christianity have irreconcilable differences in their understanding of Jesus and the nature of God, which cannot be ignored.

Borge Schantz is a well-known international scholar and researcher who writes out of a vast experience of living in Islamic countries, lecturing to audiences of Islamic scholars, and teaching graduate courses on Islam.

This is a wide-ranging book, covering the life of Muhammad, the Koran, Shari’ah law and its implications, the Five Pillars and the Five Articles of Islamic faith, and Muslim lifestyle. Chapters 9 through 11 address Islam in the 21st. century, Muslim life in the West and the issue of co-existence. Especially valuable are chapters 12 and 13, which deal with Christianity’s mandate to evangelize the world and the concept of salvation in Christianity and Islam. A useful three-page glossary and a short bibliography are included, but there is no index.

This is a first-class non-technical introduction to Islam. It will appeal to anyone wanting to understand the nature of Islamic faith and practice and the tensions and problem that exist in Western society. Both Christians and Muslims can read this book with profit and benefit to both communities.

Patrick J. Boyle is an Adventist minister and freelance writer residing in England. An excerpt of this book was published in *Dialogue* 16:2 with the title, “How to witness to your Muslim friends.”

# VIEWPOINT

## Religion always loses?

by Paul Giem

Whenever religion and science have a dispute about some question of fact, religion always loses. So goes a common belief. The implication is that religion should never make any factual claims, as it has no contact with reality. This claim is supported by appeals to the physics of Galileo, the geology of Hutton and Lyell, the biology of Darwin, and the psychology of Freud and others. It is claimed that religion, especially supernatural religion, has always lost in the past, and it will always lose in the future. We should either abandon it or at least adopt a liberal version that makes no testable claims.

For some religions, such an assertion is irrelevant, as these religions do not make any claims about the physical universe. But for biblical Christianity, such an assertion would be fatal. For how could it talk about the creation of the world and subsequent Fall, the Exodus, the resurrection of Jesus, and His promised second coming as matters of fact? Remove them, and biblical Christianity collapses.

However, there are several problems with the claim that “religion always loses.” First, strictly speaking, the dispute is not really between science and religion; there are scientists on the “religion” side, and theologians on the “science” side. The dispute is really between naturalism and supernaturalism, between those who believe that the universe is self-contained and never has any interference from outside, and those who believe God can, and sometimes does, change the natural course of events.

That being the case, the Galileo affair does not belong with the other examples. Both sides shared a super-

naturalistic worldview. The only theological issue was whether incidental details in the Bible were to be treated as ontologically (really) accurate, or merely phenomenologically (only describing appearances) accurate, and the authority of the Catholic Church in general. It does not even involve the authority of the Pope speaking *ex cathedra*.

The proposition that religion does not always lose is true, but trivial. Science can never completely prove anything wrong. In science, even if a theory appears to be well ahead of another, it is always possible that more evidence will tip the scales in favor of the currently out-of-favor theory. We can argue that a theory has made accurate predictions. But we cannot scientifically know with absolute certainty that a given theory is true.

So we will rephrase the proposition to give it more empirical content: Scientific and historical hypotheses arising from and/or compatible with supernaturalistic philosophy sometimes have considerably more empirical support than hypotheses arising from and/or compatible with naturalistic philosophy. Perhaps more importantly, this support has, in some cases, increased substantially with time.

### Examples from history

In the domain of history, one counterexample to the “religion always loses” argument is the reliability of the chronology of the biblical books of Kings and Chronicles. For a long time, skeptics believed a “biblical” chronology did not exist, and that what confused pieces of chronology did exist were totally incompatible with the “real,” secular chronology.<sup>1</sup>

After Thiele,<sup>2</sup> the chronology of Kings and Chronicles was (and is) seen as coherent and capable of serving as a corrective to secular chronology.<sup>3</sup> A biblical approach has won, or at least has shown itself to be much better at explaining the data. Religion did not lose in this case, and it appears unlikely to lose in the future here.

Another counterexample is the Book of Daniel. Skeptics originally stated that Belshazzar never existed, that the chronology was hopelessly confused, and that since the entire book was fiction, there was no point in looking for the characters in history.<sup>4</sup>

Time has forced a change in that view of history. Belshazzar not only existed, but also turned out to be the crown prince (also king in Hebrew parlance), able only to offer the third rulership in the kingdom. The chronology of Nebuchadnezzar taking captives from Jerusalem turns out to have been precisely correct. Perhaps most interesting, the names of Daniel<sup>5</sup> and his three friends<sup>6</sup> have been found in Babylonian documents. This does not mean that every statement in the Book of Daniel has been confirmed. The identity of Darius the Mede is still in doubt (although we have not eliminated all candidates). But the case for the historicity of Daniel is clearly better than in the past. Religion is winning here.

### Examples from science

The same can be said of science. For more than a century, Adventists defended, on the basis of inspiration, the view that tobacco was “a slow, insidious, but most malignant poison.”<sup>7</sup> At the time this was written, this view was not shared by the scientific community, but over the last 50 years, the evidence has become overwhelming that the hypothesis originally associated with religion was correct. Religion did not lose here. The same author spoke in favor of a vegetarian diet, and evidence continues to grow in its favor.

There are also cases directly relevant to the creation-evolution controversy. The first example is in cosmology. Does the universe extend backward in time indefinitely, or is there a finite limit to the age of the universe? Most scientists strongly favor the former, often with an explicit anti-supernatural bias given as the reason for their preference.<sup>8</sup> This bias formed a major part of the objection to Big Bang cosmology. If the universe had a beginning, that at least suggests that it might require a Creator. The desire to protect an eternal universe was so great that in doing so, Einstein made what he later called his biggest blunder,<sup>9</sup> introducing a cosmological constant into the equation for the universe to keep it roughly static. However, the weight of evidence is now solidly behind the concept that the universe did have a beginning. Religion is not losing here.

Another example is the claimed existence of vestigial organs. Since Darwin, vestigial organs have been used as an argument against design, and therefore against a designer. In the classical exposition, Wiedersheim<sup>10</sup> listed more than 150 structures that he considered vestigial. He was careful to note that some of them, such as the thyroid and adrenal glands, probably had some function, in which case they might not be truly vestigial, and that this could be the case with other organs. But some of his followers were not so cautious, and it was not uncommon for such organs as the thymus, the pituitary, and the appendix to be written off as completely useless.<sup>11</sup> This lack of caution was necessary if vestigial organs were to be used against believers in design, because if some function could be attributed to them, then their existence in a designed organism would not count as evidence against a designer.<sup>12</sup> However, this lack of caution was ill-advised, as further investigation has found a reasonable function for all these structures, destroying, sometimes dramatically, the argument against design. It could

be argued that in this case, anti-supernaturalist prejudice actually was detrimental to science, tending to cause scientists not to investigate possible functions for a structure because their naturalistic prejudice suggested that it had no function.

It could be further argued that anti-supernaturalistic prejudice actually killed people. Although the spleen was not on Wiedersheim's list, when I went to medical school, it was commonly written off as a practically useless organ that we would be better off without, as it tended to bleed when injured. (It was argued that its only use was to show that humans and dogs shared a common ancestor; in dogs, the spleen stores blood for auto-transfusion in case of bleeding.) As a result, when the organ did get injured, it was commonly removed, without any attempt to preserve its function. Only later did it become apparent that not having a spleen predisposed one to overwhelming pneumococcal infections. Surgical practice today is to preserve splenic function whenever possible, either by repairing the spleen or, failing that, by leaving small bits in the abdomen and hoping that they attach themselves.

It can be argued that believers in naturalism should have known better. Any truly vestigial organ should eventually be completely lost, and possibly fairly rapidly. But admitting this would deprive proponents of naturalism of a favorite argument.<sup>13</sup> Apparently, the need to discredit creationists prevented a cool-headed evaluation of the evidence and theory.

History repeated itself with the "junk DNA" controversy. When DNA was discovered, many evolutionists assumed that there were vast quantities of totally useless DNA, dubbed "junk DNA," in the genome of various organisms, including humans. As noted by Standish,<sup>14</sup> they were perhaps ignoring evolutionary theory in their anti-supernaturalist bias. But the point remains that supernaturalists generally

made a better prediction about the extent of "junk DNA," and therefore anti-supernaturalist bias actually hindered research (the reverse of what is usually claimed).

### **Growth in understanding**

This brings up an important point. One of the reasons "science" (naturalism) claims not to lose is that it embraces findings that were originally thought to favor "religion" (supernaturalism). Thus the temporality of the universe, and some other ideas such as the harmfulness of tobacco, are simply incorporated into the naturalistic model, and the modern believer in naturalism is often unaware of the religious overtones of the previous controversies. The topic is viewed as simply another example of the steady advance of science.

However, the same flexibility is not always granted to religion. For example, most theologians have incorporated a heliocentric view of the solar system into their theology. But believers in naturalism will not let them forget that at one time the majority of Christians<sup>15</sup> disagreed with the heliocentric theory, and the Catholic Church disagreed strongly enough that it forced Galileo to recant and banned his books, an action it has been forced to repudiate. The church was in error here. But if one can hold modern Christianity accountable for the mistakes of the majority of its predecessors, one can also hold naturalism accountable for the mistakes of the majority of its predecessors.

This brings us to a final point. The reason for using the argument that "religion always loses" is to avoid having to deal with various subjects where supernaturalism is apparently winning at present, and where if it wins, naturalism is dead. Naturalism can survive the historicity of the numbers in Kings and Chronicles, or the toxicity of tobacco, or even (as deism) the Big Bang. Naturalism cannot survive without a naturalistic explanation

for the origin of life. And yet there is no such explanation, not even a remotely plausible one. The more we know, the worse it looks. Naturalism implicitly recognizes this. The best evidence for this is its insistence on the monophyletic origin of life (that is, all life forms are descended from one original form). Despite evidence for the Cambrian explosion<sup>16</sup> and different genetic codes for some organisms (e.g., Paramecium), believers in naturalism continue to insist that all organisms on Earth share a common ancestor. If they really believed that life was that easy to start, they would simply accept the hypothesis that it started a number of different times. The fact that they cling to the monophyletic origin of life testifies that they implicitly recognize the difficulty of getting life started even once, let alone multiple times.

But believers in naturalism are absolutely committed to a non-supernatural origin for life. Some idea of the strength of that commitment can be gathered from a passage in an excellent (and still accurate) book by Robert Shapiro entitled *Origins: A Skeptic's Guide to the Origin of Life on Earth*.<sup>17</sup> In it, he points out the flaws of the various theories, finally opting for a theory of short non-modern peptides as the least problematic. But on page 130 he displays his own prejudice: "Some future day may yet arrive when all reasonable chemical experiments run to discover a probable origin for life have failed unequivocally. Further, new geological evidence may indicate a sudden appearance of life on the earth. Finally, we may have explored the universe and found no trace of life, or processes leading to life, elsewhere. In such a case, some scientists might choose to turn to religion for an answer. Others, however, myself included, would attempt to sort out the surviving less probable scientific explanations in the hope of selecting one that was still more likely than the remainder."

So naturalism requires a defense

against the obvious. And the best defense is, "We have never lost yet. You always do if you wait long enough." In the case of the origin of life, it appears that naturalism would have lost a long time ago if its adherents had not refused to recognize the loss.

The only problem with the "religion always loses" defense is that it is not true. Even in hindsight it is not true, and if current research trends continue, it will certainly not be true. Such an assertion should be recognized as what it is, a faith statement disagreeing with the apparent lessons of history and science. Religion does *not* always lose.<sup>18</sup>

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9. Quoted, among other places, in Oxford Reference Online, available at [http://www.oxfordreference.com/pages/Sample\\_Entries\\_sample\\_01.html](http://www.oxfordreference.com/pages/Sample_Entries_sample_01.html). The oldest reference I can find, and probably the original source, is G. Gamow, *My World Line* (New York: Viking Press, 1970), p. 44.
10. *The Structure of Man: An Index to His Past History*. H. & M. Bernard, trans.; G. B. Howes (ed. London: MacMillan and Co., 1895).
11. For the appendix, see K. R. Miller, *Finding Darwin's God* (New York: Cliff Street Books, 1999), pp. 100,101.
12. For an anti-supernaturalist argument to succeed, it is important for the structure under consideration to have no function. It is not enough simply for it to have minimal and easily compensated function. Otherwise, such structures as little fingers or toes could be considered unnecessary, as there are very few functions that cannot be performed equally well by humans who have lost their little fingers and toes, and yet it seems unreasonable to claim that they could not have been designed.
13. The attractiveness of such an argument is such that it is still used. It appears, for example, in Miller, pp. 100,101.
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16. The Cambrian Explosion is the name given to the evidence that whereas in Precambrian rocks perhaps three or four phylae (basic groups of organisms) exist, within a very short period of time, most of the modern phylae (and apparently several phylae that died out) appear, without any known intermediate forms. This is not what standard evolutionary theory would lead one to expect.
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## Scholarship

Continued from page 27.

that are incompatible with the premises and doctrines of the church. This would affect the way that scholars, for example, use the environment and respect the rights of individuals.

Responsible research is partly a matter of being ethical in the process of researching and developing conclusions. This includes adhering to appropriate legal requirements and protocols, and showing the highest level of academic integrity. In the context of Christian scholarship, it also means careful consideration of how and where material and ideas will be disseminated. Scholars will recognize the influence of their work on the wider community and will be responsible not only to fellow scholars, but to the church and its mission, and to God.

Therefore, while the Adventist scholar should be given broad freedom to explore ideas and not feel restricted in using God-given talents, the church should expect that a scholar will show sensitivity and restraint when introducing ideas or concepts that may be divisive to the church. Before communicating such ideas in a public forum, the scholar should first share the ideas with a small group of peers, then carefully publish within the scholarly community. Depending on the area of research, discussion with institutional and church administrators may prove valuable. If these consultations confirm that the results of the research will not be destructive for wider dissemination, then the scholar should feel free to present the ideas publicly, including presentation of the material to students in a classroom setting. Care should also be exercised when projects are undertaken in collaboration with individuals who have views opposed to those of the church in order to avoid negative impact on the church's reputation.

### Risks and benefits

Unquestionably there are risks of encouraging scholarship in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. For the individual, it can lead to a preponderance of time being spent on research, which may detract from other vital projects. Individuals can become sidetracked and lose sight of the bigger picture and their research can lead them to uncomfortable questions, or worse, to arrogance and an unwillingness to listen to the communities that they serve.

Institutions also run risks in encouraging scholarship. If not approached with careful focus, it can be expensive in time and money, and result in limited value to the institution and its mission. Similarly, without careful planning, resources can be allocated without a clear strategy for meeting institutional goals.

There are risks to the church also. In particular, scholarship can open up discussions that are potentially divisive and destructive, with issues becoming important in themselves while the needs of the church are forgotten.

Nevertheless, the benefits to all groups are immense. The individual receives the benefit of new or enriched knowledge, including the opportunity for a deepened understanding of God. Where research involves students, they also benefit from close work with faculty members and the synergy of team endeavors.

The institution inevitably benefits practically. Its reputation can be raised; there is the potential for enhanced faculty interaction and fulfillment. Senior researchers will gain satisfaction from mentoring younger Christian scholars. More than that, an institution that is actively engaged in scholarship, especially scholarship that links to institutional mission, will itself be energized. In these ways, scholarship and research become a vital part of Seventh-day Adventist education.

Finally, there are benefits to the church. Good scholarship can only

enrich the church and its message. It increases conviction and shows the application of doctrine to the life of all believers. It raises the level of thinking and discovery in the church, which gives its members the knowledge and skills to articulate more effectively the message of the church and its relevance to society. It provides vibrancy and energy. The church will be empowered by thinking, exploring and creative members who are focused on advancing the Christian mission.

**\*This document was developed by a committee composed of Joe Galusha, Andrea Luxton, John McVay, and Humberto M. Rasi.**

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## Attention, Adventist Professionals

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

**<http://apn.adventist.org>**

Encourage other Adventist professionals to register!

# ACTION REPORT

## AMiCUS active in central Philippines

by Kevin Ransom

The Cebu Institute of Technology Adventist Pherphos Technologists (CITPAT) is affiliated with AMiCUS-Cebu, an organization that caters to the needs of Adventist students attending public colleges and universities in the city of Cebu, in central Philippines. Our aim is to help students enrich their relationship with our Lord and train them to be witnesses and local church leaders. We also want to create among the members a sense of camaraderie so that they will not be lured by worldly pleasures.

Since its inception, CITPAT has been actively involved in church visitation. We go to small or new churches where there are only few members, and often no pastor. The group spends the entire day with the believers, assisting in Sabbath school, divine service, and Adventist Youth Fellowship. Such

activities not only help the church members but also provide leadership training for AMiCUS members.

Occasionally, CITPAT members are invited to take care of programs in large city churches. Regular general assembly and leadership training seminars organized by AMiCUS help prepare the members for such activities. Recently, CITPAT singers performed concerts in three different churches in Cebu, which they plan to continue to help fund other activities, such as community outreach. CITPAT also makes its presence felt at the annual conference-wide youth leadership training seminar where they get to mingle with other AMiCUS chapter members from other places.

Currently, CITPAT has 36 active members, and the number is growing. Check our attractive homepage: [http://](http://www.geocities.com/amicuspat/)



Some members of the CITPAT together with others from different AMiCUS chapters at Bato, Santander “Celebration Seminar,” pose with leaders from the Central Visayan Conference.

[www.geocities.com/amicuspat/](http://www.geocities.com/amicuspat/). We ask fellow Adventist college and university students to pray for our group so that we may continue to study and serve for the glory of our Lord.

Kevin Ransom is the vice-president of CITPAT. Email: [amicuspat@yahoo.com](mailto:amicuspat@yahoo.com).

## Brazil on the move

by Fabiana Amaral, Irineo Koch, and Erton Kohler

With more than a million Seventh-day Adventists in Brazil, the number of Adventist students attending public universities is also growing. A new enthusiasm for campus ministry is being felt in many areas of the country. Here are some of the 2004 highlights:

**Rio Grande do Norte.** The theme of the 4th Congress of Adventist University Students was “A Short History of the Earth,” based on the title of the book authored by Nahor Neves de Souza Junior, an Adventist geologist who was the featured speaker.

Held in the city of Mossoro July 30-August 1, the congress was co-sponsored by ACAUPA (the acronym of the student association) and the Youth Ministries Department of the Northeast Brazil Mission, with almost 200 students in attendance. Several professors from the State University of Rio Grande do Norte also attended the meetings.

Souza, who teaches at Brazil Adventist University, Engenheiro Coelho campus, spoke about the compatibility between some geological

phenomena and biblical Flood data. Many participants expressed appreciation for the arguments provided, which will help them to give reason for their faith. “I was glad to learn that it’s possible to harmonize aspects of the biblical narrative with the findings of science,” stated Cleine Aglacy, a biology student at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte.

**Parana.** On August 7, members of the Adventist student association for the region (known as AUANP), held its first meeting in the city of Maringa, in the state of Parana. About 700 students were present, representing 47 institutions of higher learning in the North Parana Conference territory.

Journalist Michelson Borges led the



Participants enjoyed the premiere of a Christ-centered musical.

Sabbath school discussion and invited students to contribute to the lesson guides provided by the *Collegiate Quarterly*. In the afternoon, Rodrigo P. Silva discussed recent archeological discoveries that shed light on the Bible and confirm its historicity. Then attorney Jorge Avila outlined the constitutional rights of Brazilian Adventist students.

Three weeks later, a group of Adventist students in the city of Curitiba met to organize an association. Fabiano Silva, president of the Adventist university student group in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul (known as AGUA) reported on their organization and activities. Paulo Stravink, a business consultant, spoke of the important witnessing role that Adventist students can play on campus. The South Parana Conference Youth Department director provided support for the meeting and was involved in the discussions.

**Mato Grosso.** On August 21, 40 students attending institutions of higher learning in the capital city of Cuiaba, in the state of Mato Grosso, met to share experiences and discuss their needs. “For a long time we needed to come together to plan an Adventist student association to help us grow spiritually,” stated Eledir da

Cruz Martins. “I congratulate them for this initiative,” declared Pastor Paulo Bravo. “It’s important for our young adults to find ways to strengthen their academic and professional development without forgetting the fundamental role of faith in their lives.”

**Sao Paulo.** During August 27-29, the Engenheiro Coelho campus of the Adventist University of Sao Paulo hosted the fourth in a series of symposia that brought together 1,500 Adventist students attending our own institutions of higher learning and those studying at public university campuses. Organized by campus counseling center coordinator Marly Timm, the theme was “The Self-Identity of the Adventist University Student” and included lectures, social activities, and music.

Timm observed, “based on my conversations with our students, it’s clear that when they feel comfortable with their Adventist identity, they live a better life. Our role as educators is to help them strengthen their identity.”

Among the lecturers were psychologists, physicians, journalists, theologians, educators, and ministers who provided students with an opportunity to understand their identity, to

## Students in Chile hold first national congress

by Erton Kohler

More than 300 delegates participated in the first National Congress of Adventist University Students, held August 6-8, 2004, at the Santiago, Chile Central church, with representatives from all regions of the country and from the Adventist University of Chile. The congress was jointly sponsored by the Departments of Education and Youth of the Chile Union and their counterparts in the north, central, and southern regions.

During the program, Adventist professionals lectured on topics such as creation-evolution, dentistry, and psychiatry. On Saturday night, delegates enjoyed a social and sporting event, which included aerobics, various team sports, and swimming.

Erton Kohler is director of the Youth Department and AMiCUS coordinator for the South American Division in Brasilia, Brazil. His email: [ertonkohler@dsa.org.br](mailto:ertonkohler@dsa.org.br).

## Send us your group’s report

Leaders of Adventist university student associations are invited to send a brief report of their group’s activities and one or two digital photos for publication in *Dialogue*. Include all relevant information about the student group, describe its main activities, challenges, and plans, and list the name, position, and email address of the report’s author. Send them to Humberto M. Rasi ([102555.2215@compuserve.com](mailto:102555.2215@compuserve.com)) and to Esther Rodriguez ([rodrigueze@gc.adventist.org](mailto:rodrigueze@gc.adventist.org)). Thank you!

Continued on page 25.



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Network**

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**G**ood news! The steady growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its institutions has created a demand for qualified personnel who can support its worldwide mission with their talents and education.

**I**n response to this need, the General Conference has launched the Adventist Professionals' Network (APN)—an electronic global registry of Adventists who hold a degree in any field and have an email address. APN assists Adventist institutions and agencies in locating candidates for positions in areas such as teaching, ministry, health care, management, administration, and research as well as consultants and personnel for mission service.

**O**nce registered, APN members can find job opportunities in Adventist organizations, join one of many Adventist professional associations, and network with thousands of Adventist professionals around the world. Members are protected from solicitations and unwanted mail.

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**Encourage other degreed Adventists to join APN and enjoy its many benefits.  
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**PLEASE CIRCULATE**

# INTERCHANGE

## Expand your friendship network

Adventist college/university students and professionals, readers of *Dialogue*, interested in exchanging correspondence with colleagues in other parts of the world.

**Adegbaju Adewoye:** 33; male; single; a civil engineer interested in exchanging ideas with architects, engineers, and people involved in building construction; hobbies: music and youth activities; correspondence in English or Yoruba. NIGERIA. Email: adegbajuaa@yahoo.com.

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If you are an Adventist college/university student or professional and wish to be listed in Interchange, send us the following information: (1) Your full name, with your family name in capital letters; (2) your age; (3) your sex; (4) your marital status; (5) your current field of studies or degree obtained and specialty; (6) the college or university you are attending or from which you graduated; (7) your top three hobbies or interests; (8) language(s) in which you would like to correspond; (9) the name of the local Adventist congregation of which you are a member; (10) your mailing address; (11) if available, your email address. Please write clearly. Mail this information to *Dialogue* Interchange; 12501 Old Columbia Pike; Silver Spring, MD 20904- 6600; U.S.A. You can also use email: ssicalo@yahoo.com We will list here only those who provide all the 10 items of information requested above.

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