

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY

# DIALOGUE

English • French • Portuguese • Spanish

37  
number 2

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God restricts what  
can be known

What a sports coach  
taught me about the  
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Promoting youth  
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# THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN ARM

James Christopher Harrison became known as the “Man with the Golden Arm.” At the age of 14, James had major chest surgery, which required a transfusion of 13 liters of blood. During the three months it took for James to recover, the teen vowed to donate blood when he was old enough. Upon reaching the required minimum donor age of 18, James fulfilled his vow. After he had made a few donations, it was discovered that James had a rare combination of Rh-negative blood and a high level of anti-D antibodies.

Before the availability of lifesaving immunization and treatment, thousands of babies died each year of Rhesus disease, a hemolytic disease of the fetus and newborn, and thousands more around the world suffered lifelong disabilities from it.<sup>1</sup> However, a transfusion of lifesaving antibodies from the plasma of people like James can prevent Rh-negative women from developing antibodies during pregnancy that can harm their Rh-positive babies. Unlike whole blood, plasma can be donated as frequently as once every two weeks in Australia.<sup>2</sup> Spurred by the need to save more babies, James had donated plasma 1,172 times before his donor “retirement” at 81 (Australian policy prohibits blood donations after that age).

For his life-giving golden arm, James was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia, nominated for Australian of the Year,<sup>3</sup> and earned a place in the *Guinness Book of World Records*.<sup>4</sup> On February 17 this year, at 88, James died peacefully in his sleep.<sup>5</sup> The scarcity of donors like James to produce sufficient quality and quantity of anti-D has stimulated researchers to attempt to produce a synthetic laboratory-made anti-D, or “James in a Jar.”<sup>6</sup> During his lifetime, his donations saved the lives of 2.4 million babies in Australia, preventing sickness, disability, infant deaths, and stillbirths.<sup>7</sup>

Every person ever born has been infected by a disease called sin that can only be cured by a supernatural lifesaving transfusion. The only antidote is found in the unique blood of Jesus Christ (1 John 1:7–9). But with so many in need and only one donor, how does one access the needed transfusion? It is readily available to all for free as a gift received through faith (1 John 2:2). Believers also get a booster, as it were, through the Communion service (Matthew 26:26–29, 1 Corinthians 11:23–26). The benefit from the physical act of eating the bread and drinking from the fruit of the vine, which represents Christ’s blood, again depends on faith—faith in Christ’s merits, and through “communing” with Him and with fellow believers in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16, 17). Faith is not only the sole way to please God (Hebrews 11:6) but is also the prerequisite to receiving the life-changing forgiveness of sins (Romans 3:28). Perhaps even more visible

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is what happens after receiving Christ’s lifesaving and life-changing blood transfusion. Christ’s blood also raises the believer to spiritual life (John 6:53–58).

This issue contains many examples of what spiritual life looks like. In “A Wind Starting to Blow” you will read about how the global movement, “I Will Go” got started by students, professors, and university administrators who shared a vision for mission outreach and were empowered through God’s Spirit. That movement grew from a spark in Argentina to spread all over South American Adventist campuses and beyond, and “I Will Go” has been adopted as the title of the Strategic Plan of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.<sup>8</sup> The article in the series “Footprints of Faith” describes how Eulalia Richards became a health pioneer in the U.K. and Australia. Dr. Richards was a gifted public and academic speaker and author, especially on women’s and girls’ health issues, in addition to being a busy clinician in obstetrics and anesthesia and the mother of three children. Dr. Richards achieved extraordinary professional accomplishments and navigated personal disappointments, all through a living faith in the One who never fails.

Two short reports in this issue of *Dialogue* show how young people are making an impact today. In Uganda, an evangelistic meeting was held called “Youth for Christ.” In a report on celebrating 10 years of Public Campus Ministries, we hear what is happening in South Korea. Safary Wa-Mbaleka’s article about youth involvement in leadership provides another illustration of living an empowered life. And that is what *Dialogue* encourages. The purpose of this journal is for readers to come to know faith as it is in Christ, to live out that faith, and to share it wherever they are. ☪

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**NOTES AND REFERENCES**

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# HOW EXCLUDING GOD RESTRICTS WHAT CAN BE KNOWN

More than half of all members of the American Association for the Advancement of Science believe in some kind of deity, but this belief is excluded from scientific textbooks and articles.

**ARIEL A. ROTH**

**T**wo centuries ago, Pierre-Simon de Laplace developed a theory about how a cloud of dust could flatten out to form a solar system. The emperor Napoleon asked Laplace why he had not considered the Creator of the universe in his model. The famous French cosmologist-mathematician tersely replied that he “had no need of that particular hypothesis!”<sup>1</sup> This illustrates the materialistic (mechanistic, naturalistic) stance that science has taken, which excludes God from its explanatory menu.

Science does not have to exclude God. The leading pioneers of modern science, such as Kepler, Galileo, Boyle, Newton, Pascal, and Linnaeus, advocated that God was the primordial creator. These pioneers illustrate that very good science can progress when God is included in the equation. Many of the fundamental laws of science were discovered by these pioneers. However, starting particularly in the 19th century, science redefined itself as purely materialistic, and removed God from consideration. Everything had to be explained by the interactions of matter.

More recently, Harvard University biologist Richard Lewontin candidly pointed out in a perceptive statement some of the thinking regarding this subject: “Our willingness to accept scientific claims that are against common sense is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural. We take the side of science *in spite* of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, *in spite* of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of life and health, *in spite* of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept material explanations of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counterintuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.”<sup>22</sup> Now, science explicitly excludes God and has become atheistic.

## IMPLICATIONS

Not all scientists are atheists. It is the modern practice of science that is atheistic. A 1996 study indicated that about 40 percent of American Men and Women of Science believed in a God that answered their prayers.<sup>3</sup> However, a subsequent query of the prestigious members of the National Academy of Science, U.S.A., indicated that only seven percent believed in a God that answers their prayers,<sup>4</sup> indicating that the leaders of the scientific community especially favor a materialistic stance.

A more recent Pew Research Center survey of members of the American Association for the Advancement of Science indicated that “just over half of scientists (51%) believe in some form of deity or higher power; specifically, 33% say they believe in God, while 18% believe in a universal spirit or higher power. By contrast, 95% of Americans believe in some form of deity or higher power.”<sup>5</sup> The paradox is that half of the scientists who belong to this prestigious organization believe in some kind of deity, but this belief is excluded from scientific textbooks and articles. Often, what is published does not reflect the beliefs of the scientific community as a whole.

How does science, which claims to put a priority on discovering truth, manage to ignore God and the beliefs of many scientists? The current science paradigm is a peculiar combination of a search for truth about nature and the bizarre restriction that excludes any investigation of supernatural activity in nature. This is strange, since science has not demonstrated that God does not exist. Scientism,

“[t]he idea that scientific knowledge is the only knowledge that is worth having, and that other forms of knowledge, such as religious or philosophical knowledge, are either inferior or irrelevant,”<sup>6</sup> dominates in science, repressing the all-important broader reality about how things really are.

On the other hand, the Bible, overwhelmingly the world’s most-popular book, takes a more eclectic approach, addressing both nature and God, and instructing us to “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21, KJV). In science, you can speculate by making unbridled suggestions, such as the existence of other universes, or the idea that life started on Earth when interstellar space travelers accidentally left life-bearing garbage on a previously sterile planet,<sup>7</sup> but now in science you can’t speculate about God or the supernatural! Science has an antireligious bias. The laws of science permit researchers to do a lot of good science without invoking God’s activities, but that does not legitimately exclude God from reality.

Science is considered by many to be humanity’s greatest achievement. One has only to mention things like antibiotics, space exploration, atomic bombs, genetic engineering, or artificial intelligence, to evoke considerable awe and admiration. There are other contributing factors to science’s ability to shape public discourse,<sup>8</sup> but it is hard to argue against success, which can be so intoxicating that all else is ignored. Because of its unprecedented success in explaining many natural phenomena, science feels free to choose to exclude God and become purely materialistic. It is convinced that if there aren’t good answers now, science will eventually provide them!

In the past century and a half, secular science has become a dominant paradigm for a worldview that is honestly believed by many to be true. Its views are respected and influence many other disciplines such as psychology, history, sociology, geography, medicine, and religion. However, it needs to be kept in perspective that worldviews and paradigms change over time as illustrated by the dominance of intellectualism in antiquity, of authoritarianism in the Middle Ages, and of materialism in a lot of current thinking.

## INADEQUACIES

Like the worldviews that preceded it, materialism presents many philosophical and practical problems. Materialism fails miserably when it comes to explaining our deeper questions such as the meaning of human existence and consciousness, moral values, and emotions. Science contributes little to our appreciation of art, music, religion, and other factors beyond simple materialism. Scientists who with religious fervor defend secular

materialism are an interesting example of a reality above simple materialism. And there is also the deep question of free will possessed by human beings, which because it is free, rises above the simple cause and effect of scientific materialism. Human beings can examine a lot of ordinary matter, for a very long time, without finding any of these deeper characteristics! If life is just materialistic and has no meaning, why do human societies not treat the deceased as trash, instead of honoring them with memorials in cemeteries?

## CONTROVERSIES

At present, God is, by definition, excluded from science. If a chemist synthesizes a molecule, that is defined as science, whereas if God does the same thing, that is not recognized as science! Simple materialism is more predictable than a supernatural entity, but that does not mean that God or the supernatural does not exist. A common argument against believing in God is called the “God of the gaps” argument. It is proposed that whenever those who believe in God encounter phenomena that science can’t explain (a gap), they just invoke God’s miraculous intervention as the reason for it! Secularists propose that although there may be a temporary need to insert “act of God” to fill gaps and suggest a cause for phenomena that science cannot explain, with more research, scientists will eventually find a naturalistic explanation for everything, and will no longer need to give credit to any supernatural activity. Scientists feel more secure when they can observe simple cause and effect in matter. But the *kind* of God described in the Bible is far more complex and needs to be considered in the equation.

An intriguing thesis, endorsed by a number of leading scholars, including Alfred North Whitehead, R. G. Collingwood, Reijer Hooykaas, and Stanley L. Jaki, proposes that modern science, which developed in the Western world in the 16th and 17th centuries, owes its success to the single, precise, consistent, and rational God of the Judeo-Christian tradition that fits well with the causality of science. Science did not flourish in the Eastern world (Egypt, Greece, India, or China), because of those cultures’ belief in many capricious gods or in the absence of a supernatural deity.<sup>9</sup> Paradoxically, the very God who may be responsible for modern science has been expelled by that very same science!<sup>10</sup>

Materialistic science has a counterpart to the God-of-the-gaps theory—the belief that incredible improbabilities can occur over time. This reasoning dominates in significant materialistic venues but soon ceases to be compelling because it enables one to predict all kinds of events happening by simply assuming that with sufficient



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time, eventually the desired kinds of changes will occur. Like the God-of-the-gaps concept, this concept is difficult to disprove. However, when it is quantitatively evaluated (something that is seldom done), one generally ends up with unrealistic improbabilities. Examples follow.

## EVALUATIONS

How could the first life form, evolving all by itself on the original, empty Earth?<sup>11</sup> All kinds of delicate organic molecules need to come together at the same time and place to form a living cell that is able to thrive and reproduce itself. But consider the example of merely trying to create one specific protein molecule. Molecular biologist Herbert Yockey of the University of California (Berkeley) calculated how long it would take, by chance, to form one specific protein molecule starting with  $10^{44}$  (that is, the number 1 followed by 44 zeros) amino acid molecules, the building blocks of proteins, in the world’s oceans. He calculated that it would take on an average  $10^{23}$  (that’s the number 1, followed by 23 zeros) years to produce one specific protein molecule.<sup>12</sup> Since the assumed geologic age of the Earth is less than five billion years, that time is 10 thousand billion times too short to facilitate the formation of one specific protein molecule.

Furthermore, even if one specific, delicate protein molecule did form, it would very likely disintegrate long

before another one had the chance to form, so this is a non-starter! The simplest form of life we know about, a tiny mycoplasma bacterium, has several hundred different specific kinds of protein molecules and likely has some 50,000 protein molecules in its body!<sup>13</sup> Other studies reveal improbabilities more extreme than the one described above, yet science textbooks assume that the spontaneous generation of life is a fact.

Random mutations can sometimes provide micro-evolutionary survival-of-the-fittest advantages, especially in rapidly reproducing microorganisms. But, for several reasons, the survival-of-the-fittest model runs into trouble in complex environments. A major problem is that beneficial mutations are very rare. Recent studies suggest that the ratio of beneficial mutations to deleterious ones may be somewhere between one out of a thousand and one out of a million.<sup>14</sup> To get around this problem, some point to the many so-called neutral mutations that have essentially no effect, but when it comes to the survival of the genome, essentially all mutations are harmful and will eventually destroy the whole genome. A mutation can be compared to changes in the letters in a book—just changing one or two letters does not destroy the book—but changing too many will modify it irreparably.

Another difficult problem for evolution is how to provide continuous survival advantage for gradually evolving systems that don't work independently and have no survival value until all the necessary parts are functional. For instance, the muscles in the iris of the eye, which adjust the size of the pupil, are a useless encumbrance if they lack a control system to respond to light intensity and/or accommodation so as to provide some survival value for the continued existence of the muscles. Adding all the many necessary random mutations all at once by chance, in order to provide evolutionary survival value, is essentially impossible.

Another challenge to evolution is the great plethora of deleterious mutations that keeps on getting larger and larger as generations follow more generations. For advanced animals like reptiles, birds, and mammals, which have few offspring, evolutionary survival of the fittest is especially challenged because there are insufficient offspring for natural selection to attempt to eliminate bad mutations, in order to achieve progress. Geneticist John Sanford, who has thoroughly studied this problem, points out that “there are so many bad mutations, we cannot afford to pay the reproductive cost of eliminating *them*. Since we cannot afford to stop degeneration, we obviously have nothing left over in terms of surplus to fund progressive selection.”<sup>15</sup> The plethora of bad mutations overwhelms the rare positive results from natural selection.

A major challenge to assumed long geological ages on Earth is the rate of erosion. Rain runoff, streams, and rivers transport eroded sediments from the planet's continents to the sea; and the total quantity of sediments (which has been estimated in at least a dozen studies conducted by geologists) indicate that the present average rate of erosion of Earth's continents is about 61 meters (200 feet) per million years. That may seem slow, but at that rate, our present continents, which average 623 meters (2,000 feet) above sea level, would be eroded down to sea level in about 10 million years!<sup>16</sup> In other words, in the putative four to five billion years assumed as the age of our continents, they could have been eroded down to sea level at least 400 times—but they are still here! A common explanation given by geologists is that the reason we still have continents and mountains is that the rocks are renewed from below. That suggestion cannot be taken seriously, since the whole geologic column, dated largely by radiometric methods, is still there. We have not gone through even one complete cycle of erosion and renewal! This shows that there is good scientific evidence that favors the biblical account of beginnings.

## PREDICTIONS

Science's current secular stance will not surprise the Bible scholar, since the Scriptures predicted this 2,000 years ago when the apostle Peter indicated that the idea of Creation and the Flood would be challenged. He stated that “scoffers will come in the last days” who “deliberately overlook this fact, . . . [that] the earth was formed . . . by the word of God, and that . . . the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished” (2 Peter 3:3, 5, 6, ESV).<sup>17</sup> Throughout science today, evolution has replaced a belief in supernatural creation, and long geologic ages have replaced the Flood as an explanation for the fossil record.

## THE VERDICT

In a broad search for truth, the “elephant in the room” is materialistic science, which insidiously excludes God from consideration. With millions of scientists interpreting nature without God, and only a small minority including Him, the dominant paradigm has a strong secular bias. Materialism engenders within its own parameters unrealistic explanations that are simplistic and incapable of addressing humanity's deeper questions about origins, the meaning of human existence, and our ultimate destiny. If science is a genuine, open search for truth, it should be willing to follow the data of nature, wherever it may lead; and there is a significant body of scientific data that is hard to explain unless one believes in a perceptive Designer.<sup>18</sup>

In a biblical context, the deep tragedy is that secularism encourages agnosticism or atheism, which are destructive to the eternal salvation extended to us from a forgiving and just God. As teachers or students survey the millions of scientific articles published every year, and they find virtually no mention of Creation or the Flood, this can be overwhelming to the uninitiated and easily interpreted to mean these events never occurred. One's worldview can be shaped by what one does not find. Many youth lose confidence in their church and leave the religious faith of their families, opting for encouragement from a very successful science enterprise that arbitrarily excludes any reality beyond simple materialism. Christian parents, teachers, scientists, and everyone committed to a truthful discussion of the deep questions of origins, need to purposefully share information about the insidious distortion of truth engendered by science's paradigm that excludes God. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, with its iconic seventh-day Sabbath as a memorial of creation, has a special opportunity and responsibility to counter science's secularism. 🏛️

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17. The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.
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#### SOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL READING:

##### ONLINE

- Earth History Research Center: <http://origins.swau.edu>
- Theological Crossroads: <http://www.theox.org>. See especially the Study Guides.
- Sean D. Pitman, "Detecting Design": <http://www.detectingdesign.com/wp>
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# WHAT A SPORTS COACH TAUGHT ME ABOUT THE LAW OF GOD

MARCELO FALCONIER



I was leafing through a popular magazine at the barbershop when an article about a particular coach piqued my interest. One of my sports-savvy friends even had a biography of that coach on his living-room table. I learned that not only was this man a great coach, but also that he belonged to an exclusive group of people who *understood the game*.

### SPORTS AND THE LAW OF GOD<sup>1</sup>

Rules are the first parallel that comes to mind between sports and God's law. Rules shape, permit, forbid, *protect*, and have consequences. However, in some ways, this rather Western concept of the law is at odds with the biblical definition.<sup>2</sup> An analogy between sports and the law would include but not be limited to the rules. While many people can give the reason for a rule, not everyone can *interpret* the game. This is where the coach fits in. A more biblical understanding of the law is one of direction<sup>3</sup>—knowing what to do (and what not to do), and when to do it. The Torah, the written law in the Bible, applied to sports, would mean understanding the entire game, its secrets, its beauty, its logic—and, of course, rules would be included in that whole.

Ever since I was a child, I have found it difficult to understand how some people could love a set of rules so much that they think about them day and night. But suppose we view the Law in its broader sense, as the instruction unlocking the game's secrets (including the rules). We might then envision believers loving and even being grateful for clues that help us understand it, meditating on these clues day and night, raising a cheer for the instruction, and seeking every opportunity to learn more (e.g., Joshua 1:7, 8, Ezra 7:10, Psalm 1:2, 19:7, 40:8, 119:1, 18, 29, 44, 69, 70, 77, 97, 113).

Imagine experts on a radio or television program debating with a 12-year-old boy who is consistently one step ahead of them. Part of the reason a child from a simple family in Nazareth could surprise doctors of the law is that while *they knew the rules*, *He understood the game*.<sup>4</sup>

In sports, understanding the game involves knowing the rules, strategy, nutrition, physiology, psychology, and statistics. Other factors include the ball's physics, the human body's biomechanics, the neurosciences of learning and adapting, and even weather and atmospheric conditions. A coach does not have to

be an expert in all those fields—no one can be—but a coach who understands the game needs to have correct intuition about the interaction of different factors.<sup>5</sup> Even then, knowing the game requires the capacity to select and prioritize. “With their magnifying of things small and their belittling of things great,”<sup>6</sup> the rabbinic schools contributed little to the “game” of life. In contrast, Jesus prioritized “that which will enlarge man's capacity for knowing God, and increase his power to do good.”<sup>7</sup> He summarized all the Law and the Prophets into one notion: love (Matthew 22:36–40).

To ““Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind”” and to ““Love your neighbor as yourself”” (NIV)<sup>8</sup> is comparable to a coach saying: “Go, play well, play with all your heart.” Love is the whole point. Every bit of knowledge and skill is meant to contribute to that. The problem is that most of us have inadequate notions of love, so God was precise in teaching us what love is—and, most importantly, how to love. The law is that instruction. This means we don't have to wait until the second coming of Jesus to have a better life.<sup>9</sup> We can begin a process now of being taught by the One who created life and love.

### NOT A MERE SOCIAL CONVERSATION

Sports are a popular topic of conversation in the part of the world where I live. People enthusiastically discuss various games, and self-proclaimed “experts” share their views, claiming to understand why a team does not perform well, and offering potential solutions. However, most of these “experts” never enter the field of play, at least not the one they are discussing. And we can do something similar to the law. We analyze and discuss it, but how much does it affect the field of play in our lives? We might talk about economics and business, but do we put our money on the line?

Whether we realize it or not, we are always “playing” and putting our capital at risk as long as we are alive. Our emotions, health, time, relationships, abilities, and projects are all factors in what we call the “game of life.” We are constantly doing—or failing to do—something with our lives that impacts us and those around us.

### COVENANT AND TORAH

The comparison is limited, and differences exist in the analogies we might use. God is not reducible

God's love is not diminished for those who reject Him. It's their loss. He "causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45, NIV).

to a coach, nor entirely comparable to a hen, eagle, grapevine, door, or rock. There is another distinct difference: Most renowned coaches have access to elite players. Unlike top coaches, God was willing to make a standard for the rest of the nations from a people enslaved for generations.

It would be comparable to a world-class coach offering to train a group of amateur enthusiasts who are incapable of paying him and do not merit his attention. Nonetheless, let's presume he desires to do so. It would require some kind of relationship, with the coach making a statement similar to this: "I shall be your coach, and you will be my team. If you trust me, you will follow my directions, and I guarantee you will be astounded by how well you play. Others will also inquire about the reason for this transformation, and you will be able to teach them as well."<sup>10</sup> If accepted, this relationship encompasses their entire life. Every request is for their good, even if they cannot fully comprehend it at that moment.

Acceptance and commitment are essential components of a covenant relationship. God's love is not diminished for those who reject Him. It's their loss. He "causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45, NIV). However, He seeks to bless His creatures to the extent they will allow it.<sup>11</sup> Transformation and guidance into a better life are components of the gift.<sup>12</sup>

I recall a coach discussing goals with us on the first day of pre-season training. He said, "We can have a good time together by practicing less and conversing more. We just have to lower our expectations. However, if we want to make the playoffs, we must practice hard. By working hard, you will not be doing it to impress me but rather to have a whole different experience when you play." We trusted him

and yet could hardly believe it when we were playing well and in the finals.<sup>13</sup>

That a world-class coach would be willing to lead a group of amateurs is extremely unlikely. However, this is Old Testament grace. Before offering the Ten Commandments as a gift at Sinai, the narrative makes clear the existence of a covenant relationship (Exodus 19:5) in which God compared Himself to a parent eagle who would teach them how to fly<sup>14</sup> and, in another metaphor, transform them into a kingdom of priests and holy people.<sup>15</sup> That's what the covenant and the Torah do: transform a bunch of slaves into a royal priesthood.

Anyone can join this team and improve if they believe in the Coach. Such trust means doing what He asks, even if they don't always understand it. They accept that God "will show . . . [them] the path of life" (Psalm 16:11, NKJV)<sup>16</sup> and will never lead them "otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning."<sup>17</sup>

## COVENANT AND TORAH IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The notion that there is such a thing as truth has been rejected in many areas of the world.<sup>18</sup> That is challenging, and yet, it would not be the first time that the covenant people had to deal with a pluralistic scenario. In a polytheistic environment, they lacked a rationale to defend their position in the face of assumptions foreign to their worldview about other people's gods. Even if a third party wished to provide them with these parameters, they would not be considered superior to what Yahweh proposed. Their sure defense was what Yahweh said, as opposed to the claims on behalf of other gods.




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It was a matter of allegiance, alliance, or vow to one of these divinities that formed the core of how they understood and “played” the “game of life.” Through His people, God wanted to show what He desired to do with all humanity. This alliance should not have been enjoyed in isolation; on the contrary, the opportunity to enter into a covenant with Yahweh and to enjoy the blessings of that relationship should have been extended to others. Covenant and Torah grew out of the goodness of God then, and they will become a decisive test at the end of the Great Controversy.

### THE OPPORTUNITY STILL STANDS

If I were an athlete, I would like to have a great coach. I would love to learn from him or her during training hours, share the playing field, and make the most of every opportunity to listen and learn. I would not try to twist his or her coaching into my opinions because I would realize that the coach knows better. On the contrary, I would listen as carefully as possible and remember the gift of his or her instruction.

The Bible reminds me that an even bigger opportunity still exists. The covenant and Torah, as well as the teachings of Jesus, are available for everyone. The One who can transform a group of slaves into kings and priests can instruct our lives, families, churches, and universities on the secrets of life. 

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1. Some readers might find this comparison disrespectful. That is not my intention, and the attempt has biblical precedents. Even when these games were occasionally violent and dedicated to pagan deities, Paul seemed to have prioritized their relevance to his audience. See Bradley Arnold, “Re-envisioning the Olympic Games: Paul’s Use of Athletic Imagery in Philippians,” *Theology* 115:4 (2012): 243–252. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040571X12440919>; Edgar Krentz, “Paul, Games, and the Military” in *Paul and the Greco-Roman World*, J. Paul Sampley, ed. (Harrisburg, Penna.; Trinity Press International, 2003): 344–383; Oscar Broneer, “The Apostle Paul and the Isthmian Games,” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 25:1 (February 1962): 2–31; Brian Brock, “Discipline, Sport, and the Religion of Winners: Paul on Running to Win the Prize, I Corinthians 9:24–27,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 25:1 (February 2012): 4–19.
2. Siegfried H. Horn, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1979), s.v., “law.”
3. R. Liwak, “Tôrâ,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, G. Johannes, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., David E. Green, trans. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006), 15: 609–649.
4. Luke 2:46, 47. David Perkins argues that teaching for understanding requires a global vision. He uses baseball as an example and argues that a child does not learn how to play by learning every rule, every distance and dimension because even if that would be possible, he or she could not enter the field and apply all of them at once. Cf. David Perkins, *Making Learning Whole. How Seven Principles of Teaching Can Transform Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010). And that is what religious leaders were attempting by the time Jesus came to this earth.
5. College-educated Christians can make a great contribution to society on this. See, for example, Miroslav Volf and Matthew Croasmun, *For the Life of the World: Theology That Makes a Difference* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos, 2019).
6. Ellen White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1903), 77.
7. *Ibid.*, 81.
8. Scripture references in this article credited to NIV are quoted from the *New International Version of the Bible*. Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.
9. “‘Something better’ is the watchword of education, the law of all true living” (White, *Education*, 296).
10. I could not include all the elements without forcing the analogy. For a more accurate description of covenant in Old Testament times, see George E. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh: The Biblical Colloquium, 1955).
11. John Peckham states: “the freedom of humans to respond to God does not mean that humans merit God’s love or in any way earn the right to relationship with him; the positive human response to God’s love is no more meritorious than the acceptance of a gift from a benefactor” (*The Love of God: A Canonical Model* [Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2015], 153).
12. The concept that humans play a passive role must be revisited. True, some theologians have concluded that salvation can be earned via works, but the solution is not to assume a passive role of humanity in transformation. Here the sports analogy is helpful as well: The coach’s decision to train us is a gift, and this gift entails that we train and follow instructions—not to earn merit but as part of the gift itself.
13. Ellen White wrote: “The true teacher is not satisfied with second-rate work. He is not satisfied with directing his students to a standard lower than the highest which it is possible for them to attain. . . . It is his ambition to inspire them with principles of truth, obedience, honor, integrity, and purity—principles that will make them a positive force for the stability and uplifting of society. He desires them, above all else, to learn life’s great lesson of unselfish service. These principles become a living power to shape the character, through the acquaintance of the soul with Christ, through an acceptance of His wisdom as the guide, His power as the strength, of heart and life. This union formed, the student has found the Source of wisdom. He has within his reach the power to realize in himself his noblest ideals. The opportunities of the highest education for life in this world are his. And in the training here gained, he is entering upon that course which embraces eternity” (*Education*, 29, 30).
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15. John Davies, *A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspectives on an Image of Israel in Exodus 19.6* (*The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies*, 395) (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 37.
16. Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
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18. There have been numerous attempts to characterize this phenomenon. Probably the most widely used has been the notion of “postmodernism,” usually referring to the culture in postindustrial societies and the crisis of modern metanarrative.

# PROMOTING YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND INVOLVEMENT IN THE CHURCH: LESSONS FROM THE GLOBAL CHURCH MEMBER SURVEY

SAFARY WA-MBALEKA



Leaders will always be needed to guide the church and to facilitate growth. The important role that leaders play in church governance necessitates the training of the next generation of leaders for effective transition and sustainability. This is true for all levels of church leadership, starting with the local church. In fact, the founders of Adventism were mostly youth. The most recent global research study commissioned by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, known as the 2022–2023 Global Church Member Survey<sup>1</sup> provides a glimpse of what is happening in local churches around the world regarding young people in leadership and their involvement in decision-making. A total of 150,182 Adventists from the church's 13 divisions and two affiliated fields participated in this study. Seventeen percent of the respondents were under the age of 25; 34 percent were between 26 and 40 years old; 29 percent were between the ages of 41 and 55; and 19 percent were older than 55 years of age.

This article will explore reasons why young people ought to be involved in church leadership and

decision-making. Also, it will reveal the many ways young people participate in local church leadership and how involved they are in carrying out the mission of the church. Additionally, it will explore how young Adventists are being prepared for future leadership roles. Finally, I make recommendations for practical ways to promote leadership development among young people and to increase their involvement in the life of their local church.

The discussion about whether leaders are born or made has been around for a long time. We have seen good leaders whose behavior is admirable, and bad leaders who do exactly the opposite of what we expect from a Christian leader. Whether you believe that some people are born to be leaders or think that all leaders have to be trained; the important thing to recognize is that we need leaders in society, and in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, who lead like Jesus. Jesus led with compassion (Matthew 9:36), had a clear focus on His mission of saving souls (Mark 1:38), was humble (Philippians 2:6–8), received power from above (Matthew 9:6, 7), and devoted Himself selflessly to humanity (John 13:1–17).

## THE IMPORTANCE OF INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP

The local church structure provides many opportunities for leadership. We need pastors, elders, deacons, department heads, and members of the church board. The list in the church manual is not comprehensive, and some may take on leadership roles in areas of church life that are not formally defined, such as in the beautification of the physical building and its surroundings. Though some of these leaders may never be recognized, God does equip them and acknowledges their service.

People don't need to wait until they are old to assume leadership roles. In fact, learning how to lead when one is still young bodes well for the future of the church. There are several reasons why it is important to involve young people in church leadership:

- **Developing future leaders.** Involving young people in leadership roles and in the process of making decisions for the church gives them valuable experience and helps develop their skills. It is not difficult to identify young people in the church who show natural potential as leaders. There should be an effective way to find others whose natural leadership talent may not be obvious. Both groups need to be trained for service by involving them in church leadership roles.
- **Guidance in leadership.** Young people who are selected for church leadership should receive guidance and training from more experienced leaders in the church before and during the time they perform their duties. This provides them with a safe environment in which to learn and grow as leaders.
- **Innovative contributions to the church.** Young people frequently contribute innovative ideas, solutions, and strategies that are relevant to their world, which older church members might miss.
- **Sharing and enhancing young people's spirituality:** There is a connection between leadership and spirituality. 1 Timothy 4:12 calls young people to set an example "by word, by demeanor, by love, by faith, by integrity" (*The Message*).<sup>2</sup> These are qualities the Bible requires of young people (and older ones, as well) as they use their energy in serving the Lord. Such qualities can help young leaders influence not only other young people but also the church family at large.

## CHALLENGES OF INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE IN LEADERSHIP

It is not always easy to get young people involved in church leadership and decision-making. Rosales<sup>3</sup> highlights many reasons why adults are afraid of allowing young people to lead. Some of them are discussed below.

- **Limited experience.** Adults see young people's lack of life experience as a major obstacle to including them in leadership and decision-making. However, it is important to realize that young people can obtain that experience only if they are given the opportunity.
- **Lack of trust in young people.** For a variety of reasons, many adults have a hard time trusting young people enough to involve them in leadership or decision-making. They fear young people "may not be able to handle it" and may "make risky decisions." However, excluding young people doesn't help dispel such perceptions. Instead, including them can help increase this trust as young people grow and develop as leaders.
- **Resistance to change.** When, over a long period of time, young people are rarely involved in church leadership, it becomes difficult for adult leaders to change the tradition. Change will happen only when we have courageous adult leaders who get young people involved.
- **Lack of interest.** Young people may be seen as lacking interest in leadership and unwilling to step up to accept responsibility. This could be because they have been intentionally disregarded or because their ideas have never been seriously considered. In such a situation, adult leaders need to find out the reason for this lack of interest.
- **Fear of being replaced or being made irrelevant.** Some adults may feel a sense of power and security when in a position of leadership. The thought of losing authority can be scary. However, if adults take it upon themselves to mentor young leaders, they might find fulfillment in influencing a new generation of leaders.

In recent global research study that included about 150,000 Adventist church members worldwide, some of the questions pertained to the involvement of young people in church leadership. The 2022–2023 Global Church Member Survey shed some light on the involvement of young people in church leadership and decision making. Below are some of the major findings.<sup>4</sup>

- About 70 percent of people responding to the survey agreed or strongly agreed that youth and young adults play an important role in the decision-making process of their local church.
- 77 percent agreed or strongly agreed that youth were involved in carrying out the mission of their local church.
- 73 percent reported that there was a need to increase their own involvement of youth in carrying out the mission of their local church.

While this picture gives us hope, there is room for improvement. Ellen White reminds us that "God has honored young people by choosing them for His service, and they should be faithful, obedient, and willing

to sacrifice. If they submit to God's discipline, choosing His servants as their counselors, they will develop into high-principled, steadfast workers whom God can trust with responsibilities."<sup>5</sup> God does not call only adults for His mission. He also calls young people.

Regarding the preparation of young people for future leadership roles, the survey discovered the following:

- 67 percent of respondents stated that their local church had leadership-training programs for the youth/young adults.
- 69 percent agreed or strongly agreed that their conference had leadership training programs for the young people.<sup>6</sup>

What is currently being done in training young people for leadership may not be perfect, but it is something for which to praise God. Some good work is happening in this area in the majority of Adventist churches worldwide. From the recent Global Church Member Survey cited above, we can conclude that young people are being involved in local church leadership, decision-making, the mission of the church,

and leadership development. Since this involvement was reported by roughly 70 percent of respondents, there were still about 30 percent of the survey respondents who disagreed; meaning that there is still much work to be done.

We must understand that “Ministry involves far more than preaching. It means training young people as Elijah trained Elisha, giving them responsibilities in God’s work—small at first, larger as they gain strength and experience. . . . Young, inexperienced workers should be trained in connection with experienced servants of God.”<sup>7</sup> It is the role of church administrators and pastors to train the next generation of church leaders. Young people in churches where there is no leadership training need to request this kind of training from their local church leaders.

### **FOSTERING YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP AND IN THE CHURCH’S MISSION**

Fostering young people’s involvement in church leadership and in the church’s mission requires that experienced leaders and young people cooperate. In a sense, it is a two-way street where both parties collaborate.

#### ***Role of the Experienced Church Leaders***

For those who wish to involve young people in church leadership and in development of leadership among young people, Boyd Bailey<sup>8</sup> proposes focusing on 11 qualities that must be demonstrated by mentors and fostered in the young people. In a Christian context, these qualities are relevant to all the different leadership styles and approaches. They include humility, love, accountability, healthy relationships, teachability, discipline, gratitude, generosity, forgiveness, encouragement, and faithfulness. These are not learned overnight but are the result of a long-term mentoring process. The church thus must invest in and make a long-term commitment to developing leadership among our young people.

Adult leaders must set a good example in modeling the qualities presented above. They need to illustrate in word, action, and attitude how Christian leadership is different from worldly leadership. A person trained in leadership who fails to put special focus on leading like Christ will not grow into a Christian leader. However, people trained well in Christian leadership can perform well in many leadership roles both inside and outside their local church. This is because Jesus is and will always be their Master Leader. Learning from Jesus is learning from the best Leader in the universe.



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Church leaders must be intentional in involving young people in church leadership and decision-making. They must provide a variety of leadership training and mentoring programs, and opportunities. They must also understand that developing leaders takes time. Because of their love for God, His church, and His mission, they must invest time and effort in this important aspect of church life.

Well-planned, intentional, and regular youth leadership training must be established in each church. We cannot expect young people to learn solely by observing and doing, although these two activities are important. Programs such as senior youth leadership training must be carefully and effectively implemented in all our churches. They must be an integral part of the church operation. This is what will foster successful Adventist leadership continuity.

#### ***Role of the Church’s Young People***

Young people must not just wait passively to be involved and trained by adult church leaders. In fact, the qualities of teachability, healthy relationships, and accountability demand that young people take

an active role in their own development as leaders. However, young people who are called to serve as leaders or to participate in the decision-making process of their church must be humble and exhibit a teachable attitude. One of the things that causes adult leaders to hesitate to involve young people in church leadership is the unteachable spirit that some young people demonstrate. Whether consciously or subconsciously, every great teacher has learned from another teacher or mentor. It is important to be humble and teachable in order to grow as a leader.

The generation gap between adults and young people can be a cause of unintentional misunderstanding. Leadership development is based on cordial relationships between young and adult leaders. Healthy relationships generate the kind of trust that is necessary for a successful mentoring process. It is important that leaders model the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 2:22, 23), and that young people be teachable and humble, since a student is not greater than his or her master (Matthew 10:24). In fact, “we build mentoring on trust, respect, and mutuality.”<sup>9</sup> Mentoring is not possible without healthy relationships, including in the leadership development of young people.

Lastly, young people must learn to take responsibility for their own leadership development. They must be accountable for their own decisions and choices. They must also feel accountable to their local church. The local church is theirs as much as it is for the adults. They need to take co-ownership of their local church’s health and growth. Therefore, young people will benefit from seeking out mentors who will help them fulfill their potential, and who are kind, nurturing, godly, and knowledgeable.

## CONCLUSION

Young people involved in leadership must realize that “our calling is to lead like Jesus in every context, so people can see consistency as we follow Christ in our attitudes, actions, and conversations. Our faithful lives and humble wisdom brand us as leaders worth following.”<sup>10</sup> Consistency in using Christ’s love, wisdom, and example must be the guide in growing as a young leader and, eventually, in leading God’s children in the right path. Thus, a Christ-centered and Spirit-filled learning approach is needed in young people and in the life of the church.

A final word of advice to young people: “If you want to reach your full potential and become the person you were created to be, you must do much more than just experience life and hope that you learn what you need along the way. You must go out of your way to seize growth opportunities as if your future depended on it. Why? Because it does. Growth just doesn’t happen—not for me, not for you, not for anybody. You have to go after it!”<sup>11</sup> Play an active role in your own development as a leader. 🙏

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Dr. Eulalia Richards.  
Photo credit: Adventist Healthcare Limited.

# FROM STUDENT TO PIONEER: EULALIA RICHARDS' LIFELONG MISSION OF HEALTH AND FAITH

LINDSAY MORTON HAYASAKA

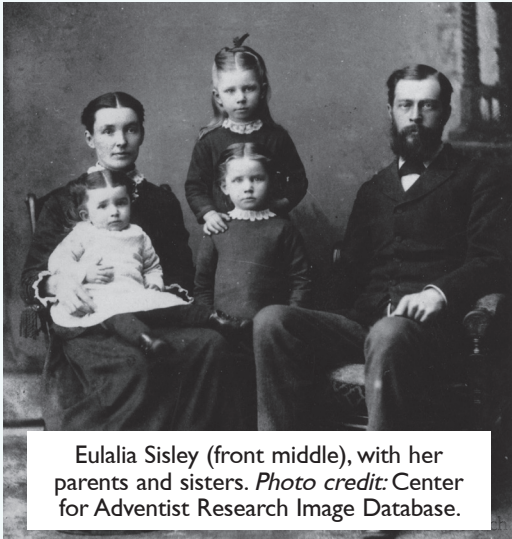
ADAPTED BY DRAGOSLAVA SANTRAC

God has given each of His children unique spiritual gifts and callings to serve others (Romans 12:6–8; 1 Corinthians 12:4–11). Not everyone is called to be a long-term overseas missionary, pastor, or evangelist. The inspiring story of Eulalia Statira (Sisley) Richards (1878–1956) is a powerful example of how one can make a difference in his or her own field of work. Eulalia was a pioneering medical doctor who made significant contributions to the health ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia and beyond. She was also a public speaker

and writer, addressing medical, temperance, and well-being issues, particularly focusing on women's and children's health. Her remarkable impact began even during her student years. The following account of her life is adapted from a longer biographical article in the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists* (ESDA), which is available free at <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org>.

## SHAPING HER PATH: EULALIA RICHARDS' FAMILY INFLUENCE

Eulalia Richards was born Eulalia Statira Sisley on August 22, 1878, in Battle Creek, Michigan, U.S.A. Her family background played a significant role in shaping her life and career. Her parents, William Conqueror Sisley and Frederika (House) Sisley, were Seventh-day Adventist pioneers who had been involved in education, medical, and publishing ministries in South Africa, Australia, and England before retiring in the United States. Her mother was the youngest and only single person elected as an officer of the General Conference (GC), and one of only three women to serve as a GC treasurer and GC officer.<sup>1</sup> She also served as the secretary-treasury of the Review and Herald Publishing Association and taught at Battle Creek College.



Eulalia Sisley (front middle), with her parents and sisters. *Photo credit:* Center for Adventist Research Image Database.



Eulalia Statira Sisley, American Medical Missionary College, Class of 1902. *Photo credit:* Linda University Digital Archive.

Eulalia’s father, an architect, managed the publishing company. Her paternal aunts, Ellen “Nellie” (Sisley) Starr and Mary “Maud” (Sisley) Boyd, were also notable figures within the Adventist community. Maud was recognized as the first unmarried female Adventist missionary.<sup>2</sup>

Eulalia grew up with her sisters, Alice and Susie, in Battle Creek. Showing intellectual ability from a young age, Eulalia enrolled in a four-year medical-degree program at the American Medical Missionary College in Battle Creek under the presidency of John Harvey Kellogg. She graduated as a physician in 1902—one of 11 women in a class of 24 students.<sup>3</sup> The following year, Eulalia followed in her parents’ and aunt’s footsteps and began her work as a missionary. She lectured throughout the British Union in 1903 and was the resident physician at the Leicester Sanitarium from 1904 to 1906. In 1905, Eulalia married Franklin Richards, also a physician, and their first child, John William, was born later that year. The Richards family traveled to Australia in 1906.

### PIONEERING WORK IN EDUCATION AND MEDICINE

In 1904, Eulalia Richards was the first graduate from the American Medical Missionary College to sit for a triple qualification, including the Licentiate Royal College of Physicians (L.R.C.P.) examination, in Glasgow. As she later wrote, the stakes were high not just for her, but also for any Adventist student who would come after her:

“Our school was not recognised abroad, and my case was made a test. I was not eligible to sit for the examination but I believe in answer to prayer, permission was granted for me to take the examination with the understanding that if I failed no other graduate would

be committed to try from our school, that if I pass the examination, others would be received without question. After 10 weeks’ study in Edinburgh I sat for the examination, and by God’s blessing passed successfully, thus opening the door for other students from our school to follow.”<sup>4</sup>

What an inspiring story of perseverance and faith! Taking on such a high-stakes

challenge shows incredible determination. One person’s success can truly pave the way for others. It’s not just about passing an exam—it’s about breaking barriers and creating opportunities for future students. Her story reminds us that taking bold steps, even against the odds, can have a lasting impact for generations. Later that year, Dr. Richards became a founding member and secretary of the Leicester Good Health League, which met at the Leicester Sanitarium, where she was a resident physician. At this time, she also began to contribute regularly to the *Good Health* magazine on medical matters.

In 1907, Eulalia, Franklin, and their son moved to Australia, arriving in Adelaide on January 31 aboard the steamer *Persic*, then traveling on to Sydney, New South Wales, where they arrived on February 8. Shortly after, on March 4, Eulalia gave birth to their second child, Franklinna, affectionately called “Bobbie.”

Eulalia and Franklin, the medical superintendent at Sydney Sanitarium, replaced another husband-wife team, Daniel and Laurette Kress, as resident physicians at the sanitarium. Together with a small but dedicated staff, Eulalia and Franklin worked hard to build the patient base, aiming for 40 patients, the number needed to balance the budget. They achieved this goal in 1911, marking a significant milestone in their medical ministry.

In addition to their medical work, Eulalia and Franklin Richards both engaged with their local community and beyond. Eulalia was a gifted public speaker and initially gave lectures at venues including the Sanitarium Café in Hunter Street, which drew considerable interest. Soon she was invited to speak at camp meetings around the country and in New Zealand, promoting temperance and healthful living and on women’s and girls’ issues in particular. A hallmark of Dr. Richards’s lectures was the

practical nature of her advice and the applicability of the content. She often spoke to large audiences, some of which comprised a large number of community members not previously connected with the church. On such occasions, it was not unusual for the doctor to hold consultations with audience members. Both Eulalia and Franklin also gave special lectures on healthful living at Avondale School for Christian Workers, now Avondale University, starting in 1909. During this time, Eulalia continued to write, contributing a series of practical lessons in home nursing to the *Australasian Health Magazine*.

In October 1913, Eulalia and Franklin completed their term at the Sydney Sanitarium and moved to 141 Macquarie Street, Sydney, where they opened their own medical practice. Despite this change to private practice, Eulalia continued her demanding schedule of writing and giving public lectures. Together the couple wrote a large medical book, the *Ladies' Handbook of Home Treatment*. A huge undertaking, the 787-page illustrated book was published by the Signs Publishing Company in 1917. At this time, Eulalia was still contributing regular articles to the magazine *Life and Health* as well as a column entitled "A Mother's Talk With Mothers."<sup>5</sup> Her third child, Wilfred, was born on December 10, 1917.

Unfortunately, Eulalia and Franklin's marriage encountered significant challenges, and in 1927, Eulalia was granted a divorce due to marital unfaithfulness. Despite this personal hardship, she returned to her work at the Sydney Sanitarium, stepping in to cover for doctors on furlough. She also continued to travel extensively throughout Australia, lecturing on health issues and attending camp meetings, and joined the Health Department of the Australasian Union. In 1928, she took up a position at the Warburton Sanitarium, known as "the Hydro," where she worked for two years before pursuing postgraduate work in the United States.<sup>6</sup>

Over the next decades, Eulalia Richards continued her medical work, specializing as an anesthetist and obstetrician at the Sydney Adventist Hospital, where she also taught in the School of Nursing. She remained beloved by patients, colleagues, and students, who admired her warmth, positive attitude, and practical wisdom. Her emphasis on the importance of a sense of humor in caring for the sick was reportedly put into practice by her students in an amusing exchange between the classes.

In addition to her hospital and teaching work, she revised her *Ladies' Handbook of Home Treatment*, resulting in a new edition in 1946. The book was for many

years the best-selling volume in its field, widely used by mothers and families seeking practical health advice.<sup>7</sup>

## HER LEGACY

Eulalia Richards passed away peacefully at her son John's home in Manly, Australia, on March 15, 1956. She left behind a powerful legacy of healthful living and medical missionary work, both within the Seventh-day Adventist Church and beyond. Her distinguished career as a physician earned her the admiration and respect of her patients, church, and community. Despite facing personal hardships, she remained dedicated to service. Dr. Richards' bold steps of faith as a student, which paved the way for future Adventist students, is a testament to her inspiring commitment. Her children, all of whom pursued careers in medical professions, are a lasting tribute to her example. ☪

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# A WIND STARTING TO BLOW

In 2009, two medical students at River Plate Adventist University dreamt of a myriad of youth equipped for cross-cultural outreach. One of them, Jean D. Pont, shares his perspective about how the movement “I Will Go” started.

**JEAN D. PONT**

*“It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6, NIV, italics supplied).<sup>1</sup>*

There was a gentle breeze that afternoon, the kind that often swept across the campus. The leaves of some lofty coconut palms responded almost imperceptibly, moving with serene solemnity. In the window of the guesthouse one could see the silhouettes of three individu-

als from three different continents: a married couple visiting from River Plate Adventist University (UAP), Argentina, and a visiting professor who was the worldwide director of Adventist-Muslim Relations. The couple had traveled to Southeast Asia for a family member’s wedding.



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Illustration 1. The Providential Meeting in the Guesthouse.

In this scene (Illustration 1), I was the young husband. I had long harbored a burning desire to assimilate all the knowledge and accumulated experience I possibly could from experts in this area of service. When I learned that Professor Lester Merklin was also visiting Southeast Asia from the Institute of World Mission (IWM) at Andrews University (Michigan, U.S.A.), I could not let the opportunity pass to sit and talk with him.

My parents had invested most of their lives in active service as humanitarian aid workers in vulnerable communities around the globe, mainly through the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). Thus, I had had the challenge and blessing of growing up on five different continents. After becoming a medical student at UAP in Argentina, I would absorb each testimony of a traveling missionary or occasional transcultural mission seminar as a fresh wind from faraway lands. What I heard moved me with nostalgia and solemn joy. Just as that gentle breeze moved the palm leaves, it stirred in me the calling to a life of service in places where I might fit in best.

“Why don’t we do training and seminars about other cultures, and how to go about mission in faraway places?” I used to challenge my classmate, Rigoberto Vidal. The conversation got deeper and more intense toward the end of 2009. After some time, he invited me, on behalf of the student leaders’ committee, to coordinate the training activities of the Mission Institute at the School of Health Sciences at the university. This was a bustling student movement of hundreds of active young people who reached out to the surrounding cities and communities in creative ways every week. Rigoberto was the pioneer student president during the first seven years of this Mission Institute.

The dream we dialogued about was to offer extensive and systematic seminars covering a broad range of global challenges. This dream had kept me alive spiritually during my years in medical school and was soon about to bud like a tender, green plant in ways least expected.

God had already been polishing and shaping me in many ways. By then, I had taken part in the initiative to organize three student community-outreach groups. I met the woman who would later become my wife while involved in these activities. One group visited bedridden patients at the teaching sanatorium

and the elderly in care homes near campus. Next, a prison ministry was launched. After my wife and I married, a third initiative was established to reach out to rural homes on Sabbath afternoons. The group consisted of about 30 students who went on bicycles and met with people, checked their blood pressure, gave healthy lifestyle and wholistic wellness courses, and just enjoyed the warm-hearted hospitality of farming families who received us as we stepped off our muddy, well-used bikes.

Still, I only dimly understood the potential implications of the challenge launched at me back then to lead out with training activities, nor did I comprehend the impact of accepting the opportunity to develop this area further. After all I had experienced growing up, I felt strongly about sharing with my fellow students at UAP the disinterested and unconditional love necessary for cross-cultural service that my parents had modeled and that the Scriptures describe in Acts 10:34 and 35. I desired to do all I could to broaden their horizons, so that more youth would venture to think differently and undergo the necessary paradigm shift so they could be useful in contexts radically different from their own.

Back inside the guesthouse, Lester Merklin proposed quite an unexpected challenge as we talked that afternoon. He suggested we would host a training seminar back at UAP in Argentina on the fundamentals of cross-cultural work. This would be offered by IWM, the very organization that regularly prepares families before they head into the global mission field. He wanted to bring a colleague, Wagner Kuhn, a professor of missions at Andrews University, originally from Brazil, to connect with the Latin American cultural background of the audience.

### MOVING ALONG WITH THE WIND

Eight months later, in August 2010, the plan became a reality, after much prayer and preparation. A hundred students were involved for one full week during the cold winter of the Southern Hemisphere. These highly motivated youth disregarded their comfort and were blessed with 30 hours of the best training experience available.

“I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow” (1 Corinthians 3:6, NIV). The breeze was just beginning to make its way through the dense vegetation of our hearts. However, some-

We could feel it blowing and could not remain indifferent—nor could have done less on behalf of our study mates, considering what Jesus had done for us.

thing with greater potential impact, which would reach further, was about to come.

“Why not do a mission congress here?” Wagner Kuhn suggested in response to a question about how students could be sent from UAP to be trained for outreach abroad. He thus, perhaps unknowingly, planted a seed in the heart of mission-minded students and staff at just the right moment. Students and teachers started investing their effort and time into something that was yet to be a reality. With the support of Abraham Acosta, then dean of the School of Health Sciences at UAP, and the administration of the university, a group of volunteers advanced with ever-increasing determination. God was causing a wind to blow, and the leaves were solemnly responding by swaying in its path.

Jesus told Nicodemus that night in ancient Palestine: “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (John 3:8, NIV). We could feel it blowing and could not remain indifferent—nor could have done less on behalf of our study mates, considering what Jesus had done for us.

My friend Rigoberto said something back then that remains true today. “I Will Go’ was born in the heart of God.” But we need to let it flow through our arteries and veins until it permeates our entire being, as with oxygen-rich blood, modifying all that we are and thus all we do.

Before saying “I Will Go,” let us kneel down with contrite determination in Christ that “I Will Be” all that God would have us be, so that He can use us beyond our wildest imagination, transformed into His likeness and thus of unlimited usefulness!

“There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, putting aside self, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God. . . . If His people will remove the obstructions, He will pour forth the waters of salvation in abundant streams through human channels.”<sup>2</sup>

Let me share excerpts from the poem that gave the congress at UAP in 2011 its name, and inspired the worldwide movement that led to the Seventh-day Adventist Church adopting “I Will Go” as its Strategic Plan for 2020–2025.<sup>3</sup> The poem was composed by Elmita Acosta (daughter of Abraham Acosta), back then a fellow medical student, written while she was serving as a volunteer abroad.<sup>4</sup> Do these words reflect my desire and yours when waking up on a random morning, thinking of a thousand things simultaneously? If we’ve lost track, would it not be time to return now? Let’s make these words our own today.

### ***I Will Go, Lord!***

Who will go to the forgotten places of this world? . . . .

Who will go in search of the fallen? . . . .

I will show your love to those who don’t have peace. . . .

I will go, Lord, please send me.

### **EFFECTS OF THE WIND**

Where my wife and I used to live with our two children, winds were known to get very intense. That wind was able to really muss up one’s hair! We enjoyed laughing together and sticking close to each other as the powerful and vitalizing current of air blew past.

Similarly, the disciples sought unity in prayer before Pentecost (Acts 1:13, 14), a crucial condition to receive blessings from above (Psalm 133:1–3), before they received the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit as “a rushing mighty wind” (Acts 2:1, 2, NKJV). Thus, ancient prophecies were fulfilled, as they will be once again before Jesus returns (Hosea 6:3, Joel 2:28–32). The powerful current of God’s Spirit helps us stay together and fills us with joy that overflows, so that we can’t help but share with others (2 Kings 7:9, Acts 4:20, 1 Corinthians 9:16).

May the current of the movement that God put into action back then do more than muss up our hair. May it turn the whole world upside down through individuals in love with Jesus, who gave His all upon that rugged cross for you and me and for every human being!

However insignificant you may feel, God can do wonders within and through you. All you need to do is to let His Spirit move as a gentle breeze within you, which will spur you to action!



Illustration 2. Embracing the Wind.

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Glory to God for what He Himself made grow at UAP, a contagious spirit of cross-cultural mission, and thorough preparation for service. Many young hearts on fire for Jesus have ventured out from there to embrace a new paradigm, a greater cultural intelligence, responding with joy to the sacred and solemn call: “*Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?*” In resonance with the prophet Isaiah, who was first transformed by grace from above and then challenged with this question, I also decided to respond, “*Here am I. Send me!*” (Isaiah 6:8, NIV, italics supplied), not as a matter of mere personal ambition, but as the response of a grateful heart. In other words, “I Will Go”! How about you? What will your response be? ☮

**Jean D. Pont (not his real name)**

*is a physician who graduated from River Plate Adventist University in Argentina, who wishes to remain anonymous on account of his plans for humanitarian-aid work in restricted areas. A video about how “I Will Go” started is available online at <https://youtu.be/kwy8nTZLJO?si=9Yn54ydFgWERNDnL/>.*

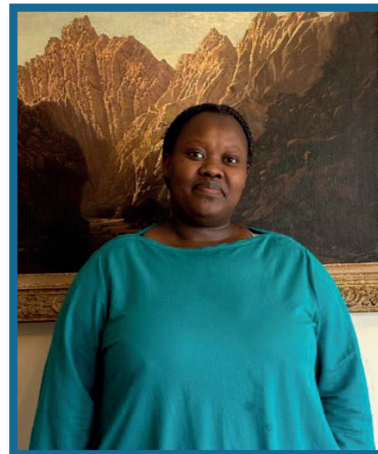
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# SBU MAANZO

## South African Diplomat

INTERVIEW BY CATHERINE KABUTU-NJEKWA



*Photo credit: Sbu Maanzo.*

This article encapsulates Sbu Maanzo's inspiring journey as a diplomat and how her faith as a Seventh-day Adventist has guided her in her career. It serves as a testament to the powerful impact that committed Christians can have on the world stage while maintaining a strong connection to their faith and community.

Sibuyiselwe (Sbu) Maanzo, nee Diamini, a distinguished South African diplomat, hails from the small border town of Ingwavuma in northern KwaZulu-Natal, near the border of Eswatini. Although her father died when she was a young adult, her mother, age 82, is still living.

While her parents did not actively participate in church activities, Sbu, her twin brother, Sabelo Diamini, and their five siblings displayed a deep passion for music from an early age, which led them to attend a nearby evangelical church, where they regularly sang during church services. Because the children's grandparents were members of this congregation, their father did not object to their attending church, which empowered them to nurture their faith and musical talents within the church community.

Sbu is married to Elijah Maanzo, the publishing director at the Northern Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Gauteng, South Africa. Elijah's deep passion for literature evangelism brought them together at a literature evangelist institute in Anerley, Port Shepstone. Together, they are blessed with five daughters.

Maanzo joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church at age 16, thanks to the influence of her high school teacher, Nana Ngidi Nkabinde, who conducted Bible studies for students. Sbu embraced the faith and has remained a committed member of the church ever since.

Professionally, Maanzo has carved out a successful career in diplomacy. She is a Senior Foreign Service Officer (SFSO) in the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) of the Republic of South Africa. She recently completed her diplomatic assignment in Nairobi, Kenya, where she served as the Second Secretary for Political Affairs at the South African Embassy from 2021 to 2024. During her tenure there, she was actively involved in both bilateral relations between South Africa and Kenya and multi-

lateral engagement with the United Nations (UN) office in Nairobi, which hosts UN-Habitat and UNEP. The embassy plays a crucial role in managing political, cultural, and trade.

Sbu Maanzo recently returned to DIRCO headquarters, where she oversees South Africa's diplomatic engagements with Japan, the Democratic Republic of Korea, and the Republic of Korea (South Korea). She is responsible for fostering and strengthening bilateral, political, cultural, and trade relations between South Africa and these nations. She liaises with the embassies of these countries on various diplomatic matters, facilitates the signing of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), and prepares for high-level visits. Additionally, she compiles briefing documents on South Africa's relations with these nations for government departments, stakeholders, and other entities. She also travels to these countries for meetings, conferences, and diplomatic engagements.

Maanzo's educational journey began at Emthonjeni and Khulangelwazi primary schools, followed by King Bhekuzulu College for high school, where she first encountered the Adventist faith. She later earned a BA degree in International Relations from the University of South Africa (UNISA) in Pretoria, and a National Diploma in Diplomacy from The Public Service Sector Education and Training Authority (PSETA), also in Pretoria. Her life and career are a testament to her resilience, faith, and commitment to positively impacting the world around her.

In a world where global interactions and international relations shape our daily lives, the role of a diplomat has never been more vital. Diplomats serve as the bridge between nations, cultures, and ideologies. For Sbu Maanzo, a devoted Seventh-day Adventist and an accomplished diplomat, this role is both a career and a calling. In this interview, Maanzo shares insights on how faith and professionalism intertwine in the life of a diplomat.

■ *How did you become appointed to the position you hold today?*

My journey into diplomacy began in 2007 when I joined the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) as a Secretary (Administrative Officer). I was fascinated by the core functions of the department, particularly in diplomacy. This interest led me to pursue further studies in international relations through the University of South Africa, with the department sponsoring my education. After completing my degree, I transitioned into the core diplomatic function of the department and received training through a postgraduate diploma in diplomacy offered by PSETA. This training equipped me for my role as a South African diplomat in Nairobi, Kenya, where I served as a Second Secretary (Political), focusing on diplomatic relations between South Africa and Kenya. I have recently returned to DIRCO headquarters in Pretoria, where I now oversee South Africa's diplomatic engagements with Japan and the Koreans.

■ *What are your responsibilities in your current position?*

Working in an embassy requires versatility due to the often small size of the staff. While working in Kenya, my role involved a broad spectrum of responsibilities, including strengthening bilateral relations between South Africa and Kenya in areas such as education, sports, agriculture, heritage, and culture. I also handled economic relations, supporting South African companies and seeking opportunities for investors. Additionally, I offered consular support to South Africans living in Kenya and other needs. Diplomacy often involves attending various events, both within various embassies and externally, which may extend late into the evening. I also managed cultural events, media issues, and coordinated embassy events like Freedom Day and Heritage Day celebrations. These responsibilities were similar to what I am doing currently.

■ *Did your education prepare you for this kind of service?*

My BA in International Relations laid a solid foundation for the duties I now perform. The degree covered



Sbu Maanzo attending the graduation of Pastors Magagula and Mbatha at the Adventist University of Africa (AUA) in Kenya. *Photo credit: Sbu Maanzo.*



Sbu Maanzo representing the South African Embassy at the Somali National Day celebration in Nairobi, Kenya. *Photo credit: Sbu Maanzo.*

crucial aspects of diplomacy, such as negotiations, state events, and multilateral diplomacy, which are all integral to my role. DIRCO also provides extensive training, both at the Head Office and abroad, to ensure we are well-prepared for our responsibilities. Networking with counterparts from other embassies has also been invaluable, as it allows for the exchange of knowledge and support.

■ *How do you manage all the responsibilities required in your current position?*

Representing one's country is a significant responsibility. Every action and statement can be interpreted as a reflection of South Africa's position, not just my personal view. This understanding instills a deep sense of duty and accountability. The training we receive emphasizes that we are always representing our country, which keeps us mindful of the weight our words and actions carry.

■ *What special opportunities has being in your position brought to you as a Seventh-day Adventist?*

Being a Seventh-day Adventist in Kenya expanded my church family. The Adventist community in Kenya is vibrant, with large congregations and high-profile members, including government officials. This allowed me to engage with a broader Adventist network and participate in various church activities, mainly leading out the music in during church services. Serving in Kenya was a blessing, and I felt a strong sense of belonging within the Adventist community there.

■ *I understand that you are actively participating in church programs. How do you balance your faith with your professional responsibilities?*

Serving as a diplomat doesn't hinder my participation in church activities; in fact, it complements it. Being actively involved in church programs, such as music directing and participating in activities/events organized by foreign nationals worshiping in the local church, brings fulfillment and helps me feel more connected, both spiritually and within the community. In Nairobi, I attended the Lavington Seventh-day Adventist Church, which has over 2,000 members. Currently, I and my family attend the Berea International church in Pretoria East, South Africa. Engaging in church activities enriches my experience and supports my professional life.

■ *How do you find time for your family?*

Diplomacy can be demanding, with many evening events and meetings. However, I make it a priority to spend quality time with my family. Weekends are reserved for family activities, and we often attend church together. Nairobi offered many family-friendly events, which we enjoyed together. Celebrating special occasions like birthdays and anniversaries also helps maintain strong family bonds.

■ *What advice would you give young Adventists interested in a career like yours?*

Young Adventists should not shy away from exploring a career in diplomacy. With determination and



Sbu Maanzo, with four of her daughters, arriving in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2021 to take up her appointment as Second Secretary for Political Affairs at the South African Embassy. *Photo credit: Ms. Manda Mkhwanazi.*



Sbu Maanzo with South Africans living in Kenya, during 2023 Heritage Day celebration at the South African Embassy in Kenya. *Photo credit: Sofie Kagiri.*

hard work, it is entirely possible to pursue this path. Degrees in international relations, political science, and communications are excellent starting points. However, it's important to be aware of the challenges, such as working far from home and potentially missing significant family events. On the flip side, a career in diplomacy offers incredible opportunities for international exposure, networking, and cultural experiences. For those with a passion for diplomacy, the rewards far outweigh the sacrifices.

■ *Revisiting your experience as a student, did you receive any sponsorship for your education?*

I began my career as a secretary at DIRCO, but my passion for diplomacy led me to pursue a degree in international relations with UNISA. The department provided me with a bursary that covered the duration of my studies. After completing my degree, I transitioned to the core diplomatic function of the department and eventually moved abroad.

■ *What advice would you give to young people struggling to finance their education?*

There are various funding options available, especially government funding like the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) in South Africa. Additionally, numerous organizations and companies offer bursaries for university studies. For those who are employed, I suggest inquiring within your organization about study funding, as many companies support further education for their employees.

■ *What is your advice to young professionals in general, and any final comments?*

Young Adventists should dream big, work hard, and embrace significant responsibilities. The training we receive from the church prepares us well for our professional lives, and by combining the two, we can excel in our careers while making our church proud. We are stewards in every aspect of life, including our workplaces, where we should strive to leave a positive mark. Adventists should be known for their strong work ethic and the peace they bring to their environments. Remember, God is interested in every aspect of our lives, including our careers. Let's strive to reflect His character in all that we do. 🙏

**Catherine Kabutu-Njekwa**

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# THIRTY-THIRD SUMMER RETREAT CELEBRATES 10 YEARS OF PUBLIC CAMPUS MINISTRIES IN KOREA

HYOUNG JOON KIM



The 2024 Adventist Collegians with Tidings (ACT) Summer Retreat, hosted by the Korean Union Conference (KUC) Youth Ministries Department, was a transformative experience for more than 200 university students from around the world who attended. Held in Anmyeondo, an island in the South Chungcheong Province of South Korea, from June 30 to July 2, the retreat celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Public Campus Ministries (PCM) ministry in Korea and enabled Adventist university students facing spiritual challenges on secular campuses to better understand and prepare to share the mission and vision of the PCM ministry.

The conference drew university students and PCM workers from the six local conferences and one mission that comprise the Korean Union Conference. However, the retreat's reach extended beyond Korea, with participants from Australia, the United States, and Mexico joining the gathering. The students engaged in various activities, including small group and praise sessions, prayer meetings, mentoring programs, counseling, outdoor activities, seminars, and fellowship with new friends.

Small-group sessions were held after each lecture. During this time, participants shared their thoughts and inspirations from the lectures and talked about their experiences on campus. Additionally, 32 PCM leaders,

divided into smaller teams, served as mentors in order to address the diverse concerns and questions of the students. For the attendees, these were some of the most cherished moments of the retreat program, as they experienced great comfort and encouragement through sharing, discussing, and praying together.

Nurturing their faith while on campus, academics, career paths, marriage, and Sabbath observance are areas where university students often face challenges and have many questions. To address these concerns, PCM pastors and coordinators from each conference provided counseling and guidance.

The goal of PCM is to help college students draw closer to God. To achieve this, event planners dedicate significant time to prayer and praise. Many young people experienced God's calling through these moments of worship. The praise and worship team for the event was led by Euijin Park, the PCM pastor for the West Central Korean Conference, who has a deep understanding of young people and works passionately to guide them closer to God.

The retreat also included outdoor sports, team-building exercises, and marine activities.

One of the highlights of the retreat was the keynote address by Ho Young Choi, youth director of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD). His message reminded the attendees of their mission for university ministry: "Follow Jesus, Embrace His Mission, and Change the World." Participants then committed themselves to becoming disciples of Christ on their campuses and in their communities.

Over the past decade, PCM in South Korea has grown to include 30 coordinators, 26 campus leaders, and more than 400 students from 130 universities sharing the gospel through 40 weekly campus meetings. The ministry's impact has been significant, with more than 2,400 graduates continuing to support it in a variety of ways. Korea's PCM looks forward to advancing its mission among university students and spreading the gospel in the countries of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division. As the PCM ministry continues to expand, please pray for the Adventist university students in Korea and around the world. ☮

Photos in this report are courtesy of Korean Union Conference.

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# “YOUTH FOR CHRIST” EVANGELISTIC CAMPAIGN YIELDS FRUITFUL HARVEST AT BUKALASA AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE IN UGANDA

SEBAGALA SAMUEL IVAN



Hudson Kibuuka, (front row, fifth from left), General Conference associate director of education; and Sebagala Samuel Ivan (front row, fourth from left), Uganda Union PCM director, with newly baptized students and staff at Bukalasa Agricultural College in Uganda. *Photo credit: Sebagala Samuel Ivan.*

A recent Youth for Christ evangelistic campaign at Bukalasa Agricultural College, located in Wobulenzi, Uganda, north of the capital city of Kampala, yielded a bountiful harvest. Thirty-one individuals were baptized, including 25 college students; and 43 enrolled in Bible studies.

Held from September 28 to October 6, 2024, the event drew 188 participants, including visitors, Adventist students, and volunteers from various colleges within the country. The meetings were led by Hudson Kibuuka, associate director of education for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and Sebagala Samuel Ivan, Public

Campus Ministry (PCM) and chaplaincy director for the Uganda Union Mission.

The eight-day program was coordinated by Deborah Sekitte, the North Buganda Field PCM director. It featured a range of daily activities, including community outreach and leadership training on the theme “Leadership With Integrity” presented by Kibuuka. It also included Bible studies and evangelism training by Fredrick Kulaba, the pastor of Katikamu Seventh-day Adventist church. Each day’s program focused on a presentation about health and life principles by Kibuuka and concluded with a sermon by Sebagala Samuel Ivan, challenging participants to surrender to Christ and live a life of purpose.



Sebagala Samuel Ivan baptizes a student after a campus evangelism event at Bukalasa Agricultural College.  
*Photo credit: Sebagala Samuel Ivan.*

“We were blessed to have Pastor Sebagala [Samuel] Ivan share the Word of God with such passion and conviction,” said one of the student volunteers. “His messages resonated deeply with us, and we saw many of our peers make decisions for Christ.”

Students and volunteers engaged in practical service projects, demonstrating Christ’s love. This helped break down barriers and created opportunities for meaningful interactions with the local community.

Trained facilitators led Bible studies and provided a safe space for students to explore Scripture and deepen their faith. Many participants expressed gratitude for the spiritual nourishment and guidance received during these training and learning sessions.

A powerful baptism ceremony marked the climax of the event, as 31 candidates publicly committed to follow Jesus. University administrators, church members, and friends gathered to witness this joyous occasion. Despite the rainy season, God answered prayers and kept the rain away during the meetings.

“We rejoice over the harvest of souls at Bukalasa Agricultural College,” said Kibuuka. “This is a testament to the power of collaborative evangelism and the urgency of sharing the gospel with the next generation.”

Moses Ndimukika Maka, president of the Uganda Union Mission, commended the team for their tireless efforts, saying, “We praise God for the dedication of our pastors, educators, and student volunteers. This event demonstrates our commitment to

## Testimonies:

“I WAS STRUGGLING WITH PURPOSE AND DIRECTION, BUT THE MESSAGES AND BIBLE STUDIES HELPED ME FIND MY WAY BACK TO GOD.” – Solomon, newly baptized student.

“I SAW MY FRIENDS CHANGE BEFORE MY EYES, AND NOW WE HAVE A VIBRANT COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS ON CAMPUS.” – Lilian, Adventist student volunteer.

reaching and retaining young people, even on public campuses for Christ.”

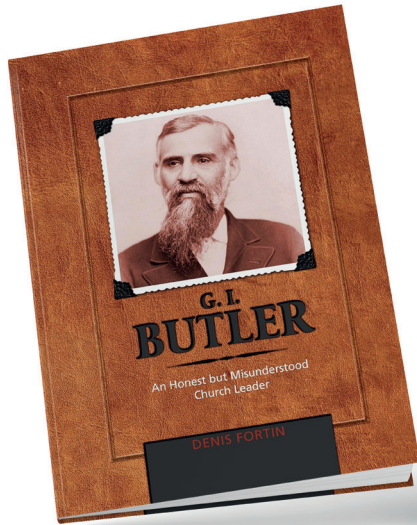
The meetings concluded with a visit from special guests Emanuel Pellotte, assistant to the president of the East-Central Africa Division (ECD), and Esther Waiswa, youth ministries director for the Uganda Union Mission, along with other local leaders.

Pellotte and Waiswa brought words of encouragement, challenging the youth to deepen their faith and commitment to serving others as Christ’s ambassadors. Their presence blessed the community, and their valuable insights and guidance were greatly appreciated.

This was one of several similar Youth for Christ programs held across Uganda and much of the ECD territory. As the church prioritizes youth evangelism, events like these catalyze spiritual renewal and growth. ☮

### Sebagala Samuel Ivan

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**G. I. BUTLER: AN HONEST BUT MISUNDERSTOOD CHURCH LEADER**

*Denis Fortin (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2023), 680 pages, cloth.*

**Reviewed by Winfried Vogel**

The book, *G. I. Butler: An Honest but Misunderstood Church Leader*, is the latest in the Adventist Pioneer Series—biographies of individuals who have shaped the history of Adventism in significant ways. This volume was authored by Denis Fortin, professor of historical theology and former dean at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University (Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.).\*

With the help of two graduate assistants, Fortin compiled a comprehensive list (34 pages) of the hundreds of articles by Butler in early Adventist journals, thereby providing an impressive database for future research. In 26 chapters plus an epilogue, the book reviews the life of George Butler in detail, enabling the reader to gain a deeper appreciation for this early Adventist leader, who served the church for 30 years as a pastor/evangelist,

president of three conferences and one union, as well as two non-contiguous terms as president of the General Conference. In addition, he traveled widely in Europe to study the needs of the various fields and was for a time president of the Review and Herald Publishing Association, chairman of the Battle Creek College board, and a member of the Battle Creek Sanitarium board as well as many other boards.

The book’s 26 chapters could have been grouped into five sections: (1) The Early Years, chapters I–V, (2) Ministry and Leadership, chapters VI–X, (3) Leadership in Times of Crisis, chapters XI–XVIII, (4) Withdrawal and Return to Leadership, chapters XIX–XXIV, and (5) The Concluding Years, chapters XXV–XXVI.

In chapters I–V, Fortin combines the available information on the early years of George Butler and presents it in a readable style. He describes Butler’s rural background and his skepticism toward religion, writes about Ellen White’s and J. N. Andrews’s influence on Butler’s conversion, and provides an overview of his early years in the church.

In chapters VI–X, Fortin describes the first years of Butler’s ministry and his leadership at various levels during the formative years of the early Advent movement. The defining transition from a mainly evangelizing movement into an organized church prompted Butler to publish a tract on governance and leadership, two years after reluctantly accepting the position of General Conference president in 1871, replacing James White, who was in poor health. Fortin’s description and analysis of Butler’s proposal of a rather hierarchical system of governance, and the criticism of his leadership philosophy, even by James White (and later also by Ellen White), sound somewhat like an intentional sidenote on the current style of leadership within Adventism, as perceived by Fortin.

In chapters XI–XVIII, Fortin assesses Butler’s leadership in times of crisis, which he views more positively than that of James White, Butler’s predecessor as General Conference president, whom Fortin describes as rather dictatorial, strong-minded, exacting, harsh, and overly critical. According to Fortin, James’s wife Ellen had encouraged this behavior by directing him to reprove others when necessary.

When Butler became GC president the second time, he had to deal with difficult challenges, including the delicate issue of inspiration, especially in connection with Ellen White’s prophetic gift, and the question of the understanding of the law in Paul’s letter to the Galatians.

These issues came to a head at the 1888 General Conference session in Minneapolis, and along with his poor health, led to Butler's refusal to stand for re-election to the position of General Conference president.

In chapters XIX–XXIV, Fortin describes Butler's retreat to Florida, where he wrote a large number of articles for *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, while taking care of his wife Lentha, who suffered a stroke in 1890. Fortin emphasizes Butler's attempts to mend the strained relationship between himself and Ellen White, writing a number of letters to her in Australia, where she resided at the time. A rather lengthy part of this section is dedicated to Butler's friendship with John Harvey Kellogg, who had written the book *The Living Temple*, which allegedly proposed a pantheistic view of God, and Butler's failed attempts to negotiate a truce between his friend and church leadership.

Shortly after his wife's death in 1901, Butler was elected president of the Southern Union Conference, a position he held until 1908. In chapters XXV–XXVI, Fortin reflects on the concluding years of Butler's life, after he had left leadership positions, when he conducted evangelistic meetings, wrote articles, and attended church councils and camp meetings. He died in Healdsburg, California, in 1918.

This biography is well worth reading and is highly informative regarding developments in early Adventism. Any student of Adventist history should study carefully and critically what Denis Fortin has put together in this volume. His intention is to paint a more sympathetic picture of George I. Butler than has been done in the past, and it seems he is successful, although perhaps somewhat at the expense of James and Ellen White's reputation. The reader needs to decide if he or she agrees with Fortin's analyses and conclusions. 🙏

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\*The author of this book also contributed a biographical sketch on Butler to the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*: s.v., "Butler, George Ide (1834–1918)": <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=7925>.

**Winfried Vogel**

*(ThD in Biblical Studies, Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Michigan, U.S.A.) spent more than 20 years serving as lecturer and president in institutions of higher learning in Europe. From 2012 until retirement in 2022, he was TV-editor and producer at Hope Media Europe in Germany, where he still works part-time. E-mail: winfried.vogel@hopemedia.de.*



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