

ADVENTIST REVIEW

**MAY 2021: MAKING FRIENDS IN THE
SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY + HOW ADVENTISTS
BECAME CREATIONISTS + THE DAY I TOLD
GOD HE WAS NOT ENOUGH**



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DIXIL RODRÍGUEZ

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TRENDING

THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:

- 1 Adventist Risk Management Names Interim President Until Replacement Is Found
- 2 Adventist Church Leaders Vote Paul H. Douglas as the New Treasurer-Elect
- 3 Adventist Church in Haiti Thankful for Safe Release of Abducted Members
- 4 Things Are as They Always Were
- 5 In the U.S., Teacher Retires After Record 57 Years at Adventist School

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Three significant events in Adventist history happened on May 21.



May 21, 1863

Church representatives from five other states joined Michigan delegates May 20-23, 1863, in the Battle Creek church, to organize the General Conference. First elected officers were (left to right): John Byington, president; Uriah Smith, secretary; and E. S. Walker, treasurer.



May 21, 1913

At the 1913 General Conference Session in Takoma Park, Maryland, the concept of a European Division Conference was submitted to the delegates on Wednesday, May 21, and voted the next day. It

was the first time the General Conference was divided administratively into world divisions. After a revision in 1918, and then again in 1922, the present pattern of divisional organization was adopted.



May 21, 1950

Adopted as the Adventist Church's first major effort into the new medium of television, *Faith for Today*, led by William Fagal, with the support of his wife, Virginia, launched its first half-hour telecast in New York City.

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BILL KNOTT



“We oscillate between the church that is and the one we’re willing to describe.”

Refreshingly Candid

Long ago, I sat with 30 colleagues chosen to participate in “open conversation” training.

An external corporate communications expert had been retained to make presentations, moderate discussions, and empower attendees to speak freely about ideas that could improve employee morale and stimulate creative problem-solving.

For two very full days, we listened to short lectures and met in working groups, slowly warming to the idea that our employing organization actually wanted us to talk openly about the challenges we perceived—and propose possible solutions. In the final four hours, the conversation began to richly hum. The moderator moved from group to group, encouraging us to listen attentively to each other, speak clearly, and search for action steps.

Hearts began appearing on my colleagues’ sleeves: some of what was shared was painful, honest, raw. Even while telling difficult workplace stories, there was an unmistakable sense of hope and promise in the room.

The final scheduled event was to be a sharing circle in which each participant identified some experience or truth they had learned.

Dazzled by two days of seeming safety, we never saw it coming. When the first person to whom the microphone was handed said, “Well, I just feel very fortunate to work in an organization that doesn’t have the kind of problems other companies do,” the hope, the light began to fade. One by one, participants surrendered to the growing expectation that only

sweetly positive things could be shared. Gone were the difficult anecdotes of feeling marginalized or undervalued—the candid stories inhaled like fresh oxygen by those not used to corporate honesty.

When it came my turn to talk, I mumbled something platitudinous about the value of listening to each other, and quickly passed the microphone along.

I had been closely watching the moderator as the microphone progressed around the circle—and as the conversation regressed to earlier levels. She seemed more sad with each dull speech: it looked as though she was sinking into the floor, anticipating the failure of her efforts.

When at last the microphone reached her, she looked searchingly at each face in turn, and then said somber words: “I hope you remember your pain. Have a good afternoon.”

We were dismissed. More important, we missed a rare opportunity for honest conversation in our workplace. Creativity slid back between the covers of the three-ring binders. Candor sensed the atmosphere was not as safe as seemed, and camped beneath a chilly rainspout.

If that had been my only such sorrow, I wouldn’t be writing these words. But in a thousand church board meetings, in living rooms, in drear committee boardrooms, we oscillate between the church that is and the one we’re willing to describe.

Each time we skip the chance for careful and constructive candor, we illustrate our actual

theology: The Holy Spirit may not move except at our direction. The preservation of our “corporate image”—our preferred way of seeing ourselves and our organizations—takes precedence over the Spirit’s call to listen attentively to each other, speak clearly, and search for action steps.

For a movement grounded—founded—on reform, this is a curious and unhistorical phenomenon. The first generations of Seventh-day Adventists spoke and wrote with a rigor their descendants now find troubling. The columns of this magazine in its first decade were alight with strong denunciations of slavery and the government that tolerated it, debates about the integrity of even such key church leaders as James and Ellen White, and biblical discussions about when the weekly Sabbath ought to begin—at sunset Friday, or at 6:00 p.m. No merit was attached to preserving a positive corporate image, for in fact, there was no structured organization yet. The underlying assumption in hundreds of clear-eyed, candid articles was that this journal and this movement would draw those unafraid to ask good questions, undismayed at discovering new answers, and undeterred in building a “more perfect union.”

We need—deserve—such clear, constructive candor in this fellowship today, even as we have become a complex, multi-layered, global movement. We owe each other thoughtful, prayerful honesty about our structures, policies, and practices.

Allegiance to the Spirit’s work will not let us do otherwise. 🍀



AS WE WAIT

I was greatly moved by the article written by Deleise Sharon Wilson in the March *Adventist Review*, and have read it several times.

I was a nurse for 74 years and held many positions. Every aspect of her article I have lived with many times. Now I am on the waiting list myself and waiting for the glorious coming of our Savior.

This article made me realize that what we do at this time in our lives will be an enjoyment of waiting or a time of “when will it end?” I am now very disabled, but have many people helping me that I count as a daily blessing. When I awake in the morning, I thank my Lord for giving me another day of adventure with Him and if possible sharing His love to those who come to help me.

Each day is a praise day and each waiting day is a special blessing He gives me. I am anxious to experience John 10:10, “that [I] may have life, and have it to the full” (NIV), when He comes.

Phyllis Alexander

Rapid City, South Dakota

DOES GOD STILL PART THE RED SEA?

I little realized as I looked at the letter on my desk how God was going to become involved in my life. I was an Adventist chaplain in the U.S. Army. I was going to be assigned to a three-year family tour in Germany. Under

other circumstances, I would have been delighted. However, I was a divorced, single parent with joint custody of my two children. I knew this assignment would be impossible for my family circumstances.

With a prayer I telephoned the Pentagon. I informed the officer I could accept a two-year family

tour to Seoul, Korea. I was informed that would be impossible, but I could be assigned to a one-year tour to Korea under circumstances where it would be impossible to have family members with me.

I agreed. I left it in the hands of the Lord. The orders came. They were for a two-year family-accompanied tour to Seoul, Korea, for me as a single parent! God had done the impossible!

But God was not finished yet. God had more. During that tour I met an extraordinary woman who agreed to marry me and take on the additional responsibilities of raising my children. She was an Adventist missionary (Sharon Davis) teaching English

I've been wrong before. It is important when we know better to do better.

—EARLE GEOFFREY GREAVES

at the Adventist university in Seoul. Earlier she had been offered a position in Fayette, where I had been living. But she turned that offer down and went to Korea instead. That timing for my remarriage [if we had met] was not right. God knew what was best.

Next month we will celebrate 35 years of marriage.

Gregory Matthews

ADVENTIST CHURCH SECRETARY G. T. NG ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

G. T. is a shining example of what Adventist officialdom should always be. It was an honor to know him.

James W. Zackrison

Congratulations, G. T. May God bless you in your retirement. It has been pleasant to work with you.

Joshua Marcoe

I really think we are all really going to miss G.T.'s jokes. Hopefully he'll be back as a guest speaker from time to time.

Jeremy Vandiemer

I CRIED FOR A YEAR

As the parent of a young autistic daughter, I understand how isolating it can be as well as the feelings of guilt. The one thing that I have learned, and it

seems confirmed in your story, is that early diagnosis and specialized education/therapy is a key to improved outcomes (along of course, with constant prayer). The truth of the matter is that the typical Adventist elementary school is not equipped for special needs children. While you were disappointed in the answer, I hope it was delivered with Christian love.

Eric Sandler

ADRA SUPPORTS THE BIRDS AND BEES TALK FOR TEENS

One thing I believe many of these programs fall short of is a full explanation of the "adult consequences" for a single poor decision. Teens rarely think long-term and therefore don't understand that early pregnancy is a milestone from which there is no return.

James Plumley

THINGS ARE AS THEY ALWAYS WERE

This piece is very well thought through and well-written! You captured the realities accurately. Thanks for sharing, and please know I am very proud of you. Keep shining! I'm praying for you.

Christopher Mighty

REMEMBERING DESMOND FORD (MARCH 19, 2019)

Thanks for this reminder to stay humble. I've been wrong before. It is important when we know better to do better. We must be careful the way we treat those with whom we disagree. And we need to listen to one another. We can't be so scared that we do irrational things. We can be on guard and also vigorously and courteously defend the truth.

Earle Geoffrey Greaves

YOUR TURN

We welcome your letters, noting, as always, that inclusion of a letter in this section does not imply that the ideas expressed are endorsed by either the editors of the *Adventist Review* or the General Conference. Short, specific, timely letters have the best chance at being published (please include your complete address and phone number—even with e-mail messages). Letters will be edited for space and clarity only. Send correspondence to Letters to the Editor, *Adventist Review*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; Internet: letters@adventistreview.org.



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“Our goal was to be transparent at each step of the process. The proposal we bring today is the more plausible solution. This solution would allow delegates to participate in the upcoming GC Session even if they could not physically travel to St. Louis because of the impact of the pandemic.”

—Hensley Mooroven, p. 11



On April 14, the General Conference Executive Committee elected South American Division president Erton Köhler as the new secretary of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The committee also voted Paul H. Douglas, director of the General Conference Auditing Service (GCAS), as the treasurer/chief financial officer-elect. He will take over his new position on August 1.

PHOTOS: TOR TJERANSEN / ADVENTIST MEDIA EXCHANGE, DAVID SHERWIN / ADVENTIST REVIEW

ADVENTIST CHURCH LEADERS ELECT NEW SECRETARY AND NEW TREASURER-ELECT

ERTON KÖHLER AND PAUL H. DOUGLAS WILL REPLACE G. T. NG AND JUAN PRESTOL-PUESÁN, RESPECTIVELY.

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

Members of the General Conference Executive Committee (GC EXCOM) elected South American Division president Erton Köhler as the new secretary of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on April 14. They also voted Paul H. Douglas, director of the General Conference Auditing Service (GCAS) since 2007, as the treasurer/chief financial officer-elect of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The votes came after recommendations from the Nominating Committee on the last day of the Spring Meeting, one of the

two annual business meetings of the world church.

NEW SECRETARY

“I feel humbled and honored by your confidence,” Köhler told the hundreds of church leaders meeting through Zoom this year, a few minutes after the vote. “I am praying for God to give me the skills that I need.”

Köhler was born in southern Brazil and grew up with a desire to follow in the footsteps of his father, who served as an Adventist pastor. Köhler completed a bachelor’s de-

gree in theology at the Adventist Teaching Institute (now Brazilian Adventist University) in 1989 and graduated from the same school in 2008 with a master’s degree in pastoral theology. Currently he is pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree from Andrews University.

From 1990 to 1994 Köhler served as a local church pastor in São Paulo. He was then elected Youth Ministries director of the Rio Grande do Sul Conference in 1995, and in 1998 he became the Youth Ministries director of the Northeast Brazilian Union. In July 2002 Köhler returned

“I will be open to [listen] and to learn. My job is to build bridges, not walls.”

—Erton Köhler

to the Rio Grande do Sul Conference, where he had previously served, to become the executive secretary. The following year he was elected as Youth Ministries director for the eight countries comprising the South American Division. After serving for four years as youth director, he became the South American Division president in 2007.

Köhler is married to Adriene Marques, a nurse; the couple has two children.

Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson highlighted some of Köhler's characteristics as a leader. “He is a very professional person, a very mission-focused person, a very skilled administrator,” Wilson told the GC EXCOM members. “He is a visionary, a very careful planner, and a system specialist. He knows how to approach things in a very articulate and systematic way.”

After a 197-to-16 vote elected Köhler as the new secretary, effective immediately, he said he believes God leads His church. “I believe in God's leadership [by] using human beings,” he added. “And I believe that God is in control of everything and that He leads my life.”

Köhler thanked his predecessor, G. T. Ng, who announced his retirement (see p. 15), and vowed to do his best to learn from Ng's “great and superb work.” He added that despite the challenges, he knows there is no other way than to move forward. “God leads my family, and

God leads my ministry as well,” Köhler said. “As a consequence, my only answer needs to be, ‘I will go.’”

Finally, Köhler vowed to be available, serving with a heart “completely focused” on the mission of the church. “I will be open to [listen] and to learn,” he said. “My job is to build bridges, not walls.”

NEW TREASURER-ELECT

Members of the GC EXCOM also voted on the Nominating Committee recommendation and elected Paul Douglas as treasurer.

“I am honored but, more so, humbled by the decision of this body and the leading of the Lord today,” Douglas told the hundreds of GC EXCOM members from around the world, who met virtually this year for the Spring Meeting, one of the two annual business meetings of the denomination. “I am not worthy, but I am willing,” he emphasized minutes after leaders shared the results of the vote (204 to 10, or 95.3 percent, in favor of the motion).

Jamaican-born Douglas has served in various capacities at GCAS since 1986, when he was appointed audit manager. He holds a bachelor's degree and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree in accounting, as well as a professional certificate in strategic management and leadership. He expects to complete his Ph.D. dissertation in 2021.

In 1993, Douglas became a GCAS regional manager. In 1997, he was

elected as GCAS assistant director, and he became GCAS associate director in 2000. For the past 14 years he has served the global church as GCAS director.

In 2020, he developed a “Road Map to Resilience” for church leaders and their governing committees. This initiative seeks to help leaders be prepared “to sustain mission in times of crisis and provide an agile response to rapidly emerging realities.”

Before the GC EXCOM vote, Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson shared Douglas' nomination from the Nominating Committee. According to Wilson, Douglas “has distinguished himself in so many ways, including [in his] very high caliber of Christian ethics. He is always striving for the best.”

Wilson said that he was glad to bring the nomination of Douglas to a GC EXCOM vote. “He knows Treasury functions; he has a very keen intellect. He is very mission-focused,” Wilson said, noting that in 2018 and 2019 Douglas helped to plant a church and led evangelistic meetings. “He is a humble servant of God; he brings an international perspective,” he said.

Douglas also expressed thanks to his predecessor, Juan Prestol-Puesán, who will remain as treasurer until the end of July. “It is my desire to continue his legacy of stewardship in our church,” Douglas said. “And to our world family, let us work together so that God can come.”



Members of the General Conference Executive Committee of the Seventh-day Adventist Church voted to hold a special General Conference Session on January 18, 2022, to discuss the possibility of virtual attendance at future sessions.

ADVENTIST CHURCH LEADERS VOTE TO HOLD A SPECIAL ONE-DAY GC SESSION IN JANUARY 2022

ONE-ITEM EVENT WILL DISCUSS A CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE TO ALLOW VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE.

BY ADVENTIST REVIEW AND ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK

On Tuesday, April 13, members of the General Conference Executive Committee (GC EXCOM) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church voted to hold a special General Conference (GC) Session on January 18, 2022.

The special one-day, one-item GC Session at the world church headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States, is being called for the sole purpose of amending the GC Constitution to allow delegates to participate by digital means in a future GC Session in the event that unforeseen and unavoidable circumstances arise.

Before the vote, Adventist Church undersecretary Hensley Mooroooven detailed some of the factors considered in presenting this proposal to the GC EXCOM members. He reminded his listeners that the church's constitution stipulates that GC Sessions and all voting must take place in-person and on-site. Additionally, Article V, section 1, of the constitution states that postponing a GC Session should not "exceed two years" beyond a regularly scheduled date. Mooroooven then explained that amendments to the GC Constitution and Bylaws can be done by

the delegates only at a regular or special GC Session. All in all, Mooroooven said, the church leaders' proposal stays within the appropriate provision of the GC Constitution and Bylaws.

Among other elements, Mooroooven said, leaders tried to make a decision that would be beneficial to delegates and avoid frustrations, while also following a clearly predetermined path. "Our goal was to be transparent at each step of the process," he said. "The proposal we bring today is the more plausible solution." This solution would allow delegates to participate in the upcoming GC Session even if they could not physically travel to St. Louis because of the impact of the pandemic.

General Conference president Ted N. C. Wilson also confirmed that the special GC Session would meet for one agenda item only. He assured members that the special session would not add any agenda items.

As the global COVID-19 pandemic continues to challenge large gatherings and travel, GC administrators, though planning for an in-person GC Session June 6-11, 2022, in St. Louis, Missouri, felt it prudent to work on an alternate solution. After the initial session postponement, the Constitution and Bylaws Committee met and recommended an amendment to the GC Constitution

THE POSSIBILITY OF ANOTHER DELAY BECAUSE OF THE ONGOING WORLDWIDE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC WOULD PUT THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OUT OF COMPLIANCE WITH ITS GOVERNING DOCUMENT.

that would allow for the possibility of virtual attendance in the future. However, the possibility of another delay because of the ongoing worldwide impact of the pandemic would put the GC out of compliance with its governing document. Church leadership recommended that it would be advantageous if a Special GC Session was called for the sole purpose of amending the constitution, which would provide for a virtual or hybrid GC Session. The GC EXCOM would still have to make a decision at the appropriate time

based on the circumstances whether the GC Session would be held virtually, in person, or a hybrid of the two.

Based on the authority granted to it in Article V of the constitution to reduce the total number of delegates to a GC Session for reasons of a “major crisis within the church or international arena,” GC EXCOM on Tuesday also voted to reduce the total number of regular and at-large delegates to the January special GC Session to 400 people for this specific meeting. The allocated quota of delegates for the GC, 13 divisions, and two attached unions was approved as well. The motion included a request that divisions unable to send their allotted quota of delegates because of travel restrictions or other reasons be allowed to reallocate their unused quota back to the GC. The GC Administrative Committee would then designate these positions to individuals currently working at the GC headquarters, primarily from the divisions that shared their quota.

A final element in the voted motion was to request all 13 world divisions and 137 union executive committees to discuss and vote on the proposed constitutional amendment and to report back to the GC Secretariat by August 31, 2021.

During discussion several GC EXCOM members expressed support for the motion, noting how the pandemic has shifted operations within and outside of the church. Hope Channel president Derek Morris spoke in favor of the

motion and said, “This is an excellent proposal, and actually what we are wanting to do is to include more people rather than exclude people. In the environment that we find ourselves, I stand in full support of this proposal.”

Other committee members posed both questions and suggestions. Barna Magyarosi, executive secretary of the Inter-European Division (EUD), observed: “First of all, I think this is a logical step in order to solve a technical conundrum, and I think we need to go in this direction. . . . I would also suggest that probably somewhere in the minutes or the wording of this vote we could include something to the extent of not making it a precedent. . . . For posterity’s sake this cannot be considered a precedent for other agenda items that might be convenient to be sorted out in this way.”

After discussion, three motions passed with overwhelming majority support. The first motion, to approve the special GC Session proposal, was approved by a vote of 169 to 3. The second motion, to convene a special GC Session on January 18, 2022, in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States, for the purpose of amending the GC Constitution to allow for electronic participation at GC sessions, was approved 168 to 3.

The final motion, to reduce the total number of regular and at-large delegates to the January 18, 2022, special GC Session to 400 was also approved by a margin of 170 to 1. 🗳️



Juan Prestol-Puesán, treasurer of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, reports on the state of church finances for the year 2020 during the Spring Council meetings of the General Conference Executive Committee, on April 13.

AGAINST ALL ODDS, ADVENTIST CHURCH FINANCES BREAK EVEN, TREASURER REPORTS

HE CREDITS GOD'S INTERVENTION AND CAREFUL MANAGEMENT FOR A MODEST SURPLUS IN 2020.

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

In a year often described as “unexpected,” “unpredictable,” and “uncertain,” Adventist Church treasurer Juan Prestol-Puesán reported that the finances of the Seventh-day Adventist Church broke even in 2020.

Prestol-Puesán’s remarks were part of his April 13, report to members of the General Conference Executive Committee (GC EXCOM), which this year met virtually.

Prestol-Puesán recounted the challenges of the past year. The financial reports during the start of the pandemic looked troubling, but as the summer ended and fall began, the reports trended steadily upward. It was in November that he raised a special prayer. “I prayed to the Lord to allow us to simply break even for the year 2020, and I expressed that reaching a break-even, or even showing US\$10,000 above break-even, would be like a dream come true,” he shared. “Today I wish to inform you that

my wild dream materialized, and my prayer was answered more generously than I thought.” Prestol-Puesán reported that the net assets of the church experienced an increase of US\$67,816, or, in his words, “more than six times what I asked the Lord to provide.”

CAREFUL MANAGEMENT

Beyond the essential role of God’s blessings, a positive result wouldn’t have been possible except for the careful management of resources and sources of income, Prestol-Puesán emphasized. “The financial operations of the General Conference have been managed prudently,” he said. Among other elements, he emphasized that expenses were deliberately reduced. Prestol-Puesán also cited reductions in personnel, the elimination of some in-house services, and the avoidance of unnecessary costs as elements that made

the financial picture positive.

“If expenses had not been cut down, the possibility of breaking even would not have occurred,” he acknowledged. Remarkably, tithes income from the North American region, which accounts for almost half of the General Conference budget, rose 1.7 percent in 2020 compared to 2019.

As finances became more stable in the second half of 2020, other emergency measures did not need to be enforced, Prestol-Puesán explained. “Appropriations to divisions and institutions, as well as to the 10/40 window, were not reduced,” he said, referencing the predetermined amounts of money that support the mission work of the church in regions where Christianity is a minority faith. Also, allocations to some of these entities that were suspended by an Executive Committee action voted on July 9, 2020, were partially restored in December. These measures helped the ending balances for funds servicing Adventist missionaries overseas, auditing services, and the Geoscience Research Institute.

“The year 2020 ended as unpredictable and uncertain as it began, but the Lord was with us,” Prestol-Puesán said. “He made the difference by adding His blessing to our humble efforts.”

ENCOURAGING SIGNS

As part of the financial report, undertreasurer Ray Wahlen amplified the treasurer’s presentation

“The year 2020 ended as unpredictable and uncertain as it began, but the Lord was with us. He made the difference by adding His blessing to our humble efforts.” Juan Prestol-Puesán

with data supporting the encouraging results in 2020.

Worldwide, tithes—the 10 percent of income that church members voluntarily return to fund the mission of the church—decreased US\$128 million in 2020, or 5.3 percent. The reduction was likely caused by global financial instability and significant exchange rate fluctuations of major currencies compared to the U.S. dollar, Wahlen explained. A tithe reduction directly affects the operations at the church headquarters, which, by policy, operates on a cap of 2 percent of global tithes. In this case it meant that the General Conference received US\$2.7 million less for its operations in 2020, Wahlen said.

“We started 2020 with an approved in-house budget of slightly more than US\$50 million,” Wahlen explained. “With the sudden changes happening in the early months of the year, the General Conference took measured steps to reduce its operating budget to US\$46.5 million. These cuts were painful,” he acknowledged.

Wahlen said, however, that the collaborative approach adopted by the entire General Conference staff resulted in significantly more savings than projected. “Departments looked proactively at their plans and either postponed many of them or in some cases canceled them completely,” Wahlen reported. The result, he said, was that in 2020, expenses amounted to US\$37.9 million—US\$7.7 million less than the

actual cap and US\$12.1 million less than the original budget for the year. “Viewed in another way, expenses amounted to just 83.2 percent of the allowable limit,” he said.

Overall, exchange rate fluctuations, reduced returns on investments, and other factors meant a total US\$29.9 million decrease in income in 2020, offset by reducing expenses US\$17.1 million and shifting transfers by US\$7.1 million. “It meant US\$5.7 million less than 2019, but still slightly more than break-even for the year,” Wahlen reported.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Prestol-Puesán acknowledged that the 2020 fiscal year left his financial team with “plenty of warning against careless management and cautioned us about being overconfident in 2021 and beyond.” In 2021, he added, the General Conference expects to catch up in several areas, including returning to allocations at pre-COVID-19 levels, if possible, and completing unfinished mission and logistics initiatives.

An unfinished challenge, both Prestol-Puesán and Wahlen acknowledged, is for the global church to bounce back from a substantial decrease in mission offerings, the contributions church members make to mission projects around the world. In 2020 mission offerings decreased US\$14.9 million (or 20 percent) compared to 2019. Wahlen said that the church’s mission offerings merit “urgent,

comprehensive study” to determine the causes for the decline. Possible causes include changing attitudes about donations to the mission and creating opportunities for mission giving when on-site worship services are canceled, he said.

Noting continuing challenges and uncertainties, Prestol-Puesán nonetheless expressed the financial team’s awareness that they have seen the Lord’s blessings in 2020. “We wish to express our gratitude to Him for His faithfulness and His love,” he said.

UNEXPECTED DONATIONS

Prestol-Puesán finally recounted how, as the financial team was closing accounts for 2020, he was notified that the General Conference had received a few unexpected donations for mission from individuals previously unknown. The donations were in the millions of dollars, he shared. For Prestol-Puesán, this is just a foretaste of what is to come. “I am grateful,” he said, “that in 2020 the Lord allowed me to have a glimpse of what will likely happen at the very end of mission.”

At the end of Prestol-Puesán’s report, Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson celebrated the positive financial outcomes amid the ongoing pandemic. “I think that the only thing we can say is ‘Praise be to God.’”

GC EXCOM members voted to receive the Treasurer’s Report 172 to 1. ▀

ADVENTIST CHURCH SECRETARY G. T. NG ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

EXPERIENCED MISSIONARY AND ADMINISTRATOR IS LEAVING HIS POSITION AFTER ALMOST 11 YEARS.

BY: MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

G. T. Ng, an experienced Seventh-day Adventist pastor, missionary, and administrator, has announced his retirement after almost 11 years as secretary of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and decades in various other leadership positions.

In comments to *Adventist Review*, Ng discussed some of his mixed feelings about his decision to retire. “[Starting] June 1, I will be down to one boss: my wife,” Ng quipped with his trademark deadpan humor, adding, “It’s an unspeakable agony having to leave the job I love and the colleagues and friends I cherish. But for me, mission continues even after retirement.”

DECADES OF FAITHFUL SERVICE

It has been a long journey for Singapore-born Ng since he felt the call to pastoral ministry at the age of 18. “The Lord has been most magnanimous to me throughout my life. It is His amazing grace that has sustained me and my ministry through thick and thin.”

Ng reflected on his early service with his wife, Ivy, as they went as a young couple to do mission work in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in 1973.

In 1975 they had to be suddenly evacuated before the country fell to the Khmer Rouge regime. This was followed by service stints in Thailand and Malaysia.

The Ngs’ service continued in his native Singapore, where he served as chaplain at Youngberg Memorial Adventist Hospital and then as Youth Ministries director in the Southeast Asia Union. Years later he became a professor at the theological seminary of the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS) in the Philippines until he was elected to be executive secretary of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division, with headquarters in the Philippines. In 2005 he was elected to serve as an associate secretary of the General Conference, and in 2010 at the General Conference Session in Atlanta, he was voted as the secretary for the General Conference.

AS GENERAL CONFERENCE SECRETARY

As secretary of the Adventist Church, Ng has stressed the importance of keeping accurate membership records around the world. He has also made membership retention a key focus. His office also

coordinates the church’s extensive missionary program.

For Ng, “mission is the marching orders of the church.” In that sense he has emphasized that the greatest challenge facing the church is changing the culture from members being spectators, where pastors do most of the work, to a culture where the priesthood of all believers is embraced and practiced. “Every member is an evangelist,” he has often stated.

Reflecting on Ng’s service to the church, Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson said, “Pastor Ng has been an enormous blessing to God’s worldwide church family. His constant focus on mission and his emphasis on Christian leadership have been appreciated greatly. His congenial and positive spirit will be missed.”

In reviewing his decades of service, Ng showed reluctance to speak of his accomplishments. “Human accomplishments are in the dust; all glory goes to the Lord,” he said. At the same time, Ng reflected on his journey: “Whatever plans the Lord inspired me to do, I have tried to follow through to the best of my ability.” And, he added, “my service to the church is a distinct privilege and not a right. I am deeply humbled.”



G. T. Ng

PHOTO: DAVID B. SHERWIN/ADVENTIST REVIEW



Juan Prestol-Puesán, treasurer of the Seventh-day Adventist world church since 2015, announced he will retire on August 1.

PHOTO: TOR TJERANSEN/ADVENTIST MEDIA EXCHANGE

ADVENTIST CHURCH TREASURER JUAN PRESTOL-PUESÁN ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

EXPERIENCED ADMINISTRATOR SERVED FOR DECADES IN SEVERAL CONTINENTS AND POSITIONS.

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

Juan Rafael Prestol-Puesán, treasurer of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (GC) since 2015, announced he will retire on August 1. His denomination service spanned almost 50 years, during which he served in three world divisions.

“It is with a blend of conviction and sadness that I communicate to you my intention to transition to retirement effective August 1, 2021,” Prestol-Puesán wrote just a few hours before Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson made the announcement official on April 13. Now he will help coordinate a transition period and assist his eventual replacement, Wilson announced.

Prestol-Puesán has served in treasury functions for the Adventist Church since graduating from college in 1969. He was born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, and began his work for the Adventist Church in the Inter-America Division territory in 1969 as an accountant in the Dominican Conference. In 1972 he began serving as treasurer of the North Dominican Mission. On December 17, 1976, he was

ordained and continued to serve the mission until 1977, when he took time to complete a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.

After completing his MBA in June of 1980, Prestol-Puesán served as secretary-treasurer of the Greater New York Conference in Manhasset, New York. In 1987 he was elected as the undertreasurer of the Atlantic Union Conference in South Lancaster, Massachusetts, and later served as treasurer of the region.

In 1993 Prestol-Puesán moved to Moscow, Russia, to serve as treasurer of the Euro-Asian Division. Following his term in Russia, Prestol-Puesán relocated to Silver Spring, Maryland, United States, in 1996, where he served as associate treasurer and then treasurer of the North American Division. He was elected undertreasurer of the GC in 2007. While serving at the GC, he completed a Ph.D. in leadership from the School of Education at Andrews University in December 2014.

Prestol-Puesán is married to Bel-

kis Domínguez and has two grown daughters and two grandchildren.

In sharing the news with hundreds of church leaders, Wilson emphasized what he termed Prestol-Puesán’s “outstanding qualities” in service to the church. “He is a professional in his own right,” Wilson said, “a very careful treasurer and thoughtful person.”

Wilson noted Prestol-Puesán’s strong emphasis on leadership and impeccable service. “He is a very ethical and very mission-minded person,” Wilson said. “A very spiritual person and a great preacher. It has been an enormous privilege to work with [him].”

Reacting to Wilson’s comments, Prestol-Puesán emphasized his background and God’s leading in his life. As a son of a sea captain growing up close to the sea in a Spanish-speaking environment, he never imagined he would eventually move with his family to keep studying and serving. “I learned English when I came to the United States 44 years ago,” he shared. “I never thought I would work to the point of serving the church in the General Conference.”

Prestol-Puesán thanked both his team at the financial department of the GC and Wilson for ongoing support. “I wish you the Lord’s blessings as you continue leading,” he told Wilson. At the same time, he expressed his gratitude to God and His leading in his life through the years. “I want to give all the glory to the Lord,” he said. “It’s been a privilege for me to serve.”

ADVENTISTS IN HAITI CELEBRATE RELEASE OF ABDUCTED MEMBERS

LEADERS CALL TO PRAY FOR THE ONGOING SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY.

BY LIBNA STEVENS, INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

Seventh-day Adventists in Haiti celebrated the release of four of their fellow church members who had been kidnapped on April 1. The four had been taken during a live online worship program at a studio next to an Adventist church in Diquini, Carrefour, in Port-au-Prince.

“We are full of joy and happiness because everyone is safe and sound,” Figaro Greger, local church elder and director of the Adventist Gospel Krèyol Ministry, said. The four who were taken are members of that ministry.

PRAISING GOD

“The news spread through social media right away, and we immediately prayed as we reached my house, where two dozen musicians, singers, and family members were waiting for news,” Greger said. “We didn’t go to sleep until 4:00 a.m. the following morning, after praying and praising God for His goodness.”

“I have more faith in God now through this experience after spending three nights away from home,” Aunulus Estimé said, presenting during the online program.

It was an ordeal that anguished the church across the country for nearly four nights, Greger said. “We know so many people were praying for this situation, and we are so thankful for that and know that the best security comes from God. We do not believe in human power but in the power of God.”

Greger said the studio has been closed while members evaluate how to proceed and ensure the safety of all concerned.

WORLDWIDE PRAYER SUPPORT

Pierre Caporal, president of the Adventist Church in Haiti, said feeling the support and prayers of fellow leaders and church members in the Inter-American Division (IAD) and around the world strengthened the faith of the church in Haiti. “We know God is still on the throne and keeps His Word and promises to protect His children. He came through with our brothers and sisters,” he said.

The church in Haiti spent three days in prayer vigils, worship programs, and prayer sessions on the radio, in online programs, and in churches, Caporal shared. “We were all pleading for the safety of not

only the four church members but for all of our members across the country,” he said.

The IAD territory also joined in prayer sessions this weekend, Elie Henry, president of IAD, said. “So many colleagues around the world expressed their concerns and joined in prayer for our people, and we are so thankful for that,” he said.

“Once again we have seen that being part of the great Adventist family is a blessing,” Henry said. “We have seen evidence that God has been close to us and close to the affected families, and we praise Him for that.”

SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY

The safety of individuals is very pressing in the minds of the church leadership, Caporal said. “There is news of kidnappings everywhere, not only in Port-au-Prince. We keep reminding our members to take

“ONCE AGAIN WE HAVE SEEN THAT BEING PART OF THE GREAT ADVENTIST FAMILY IS A BLESSING. WE HAVE SEEN EVIDENCE THAT GOD HAS BEEN CLOSE TO US AND CLOSE TO THE AFFECTED FAMILIES, AND WE PRAISE HIM FOR THAT.” —ELIE HENRY

careful safety measures considering the risks,” he explained. Although some evangelistic meetings were taking place in the outskirts of Port-au-Prince and across the rest of the country, much care is being taken to minimize the risks by taking appropriate precautions, he said.

“This situation with the four detained members prompted us to organize the church in Haiti, to pray for God’s intervention in stopping this plague of violence and kidnapping that is affecting everyone across the country,” Caporal said. “We must plead together for God to intervene according to His will.”



ADVENTIST RISK MANAGEMENT NAMES INTERIM PRESIDENT

On April 1, Adventist Risk Management, Inc. (ARM), announced the appointment of Karnik Doukmetzian as interim president for both ARM and Gencon Insurance Company of Vermont (GICV). The appointment by the board of directors came after president and CEO Tim Northrop submitted his resignation. Doukmetzian previously worked for ARM for 12 years, including three years as claims counsel and nine years as vice president for Underwriting, Claims, and Legal Services. While serving as interim president, he will also continue working as general counsel for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.



TEACHER RETIRES AFTER 57 YEARS AT ADVENTIST SCHOOL

John F. Kennedy was living in the White House when a youthful Evan Swanson taught his first history and biology classes at Maplewood Academy, a Seventh-day Adventist school in Hutchinson, Minnesota in 1963. This year, at age 80, he retired his dry-erase markers. Some of the most devoted fans of Swanson are former students often labeled “troublemaker” or “lazy student.” His wife, Evie, shared: “He treated every student with respect. He believed in second chances.”



LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TESTING WASTEWATER FOR COVID-19

Faculty and students from Loma Linda University School of Public Health have been monitoring possible COVID-19 exposure by testing wastewater on the school campus in Loma Linda, California. The wastewater-based epidemiology method has been shown to provide a four- to 10-day early warning on impending COVID-19 outbreaks. Through this method Ryan Sinclair, professor in the School of Public Health, and his team of students can detect a single infected individual among hundreds of dorm students.



PRAYER DRIVE MOVES RESIDENTS TO TEARS NEAR BRAZIL'S CAPITAL

Sensitive to emotional and spiritual needs during the most challenging time of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Sobradinho Seventh-day Adventist Church near Brazil's capital held a prayer drive on April 3. The initiative moved many residents to tears, organizers said. The Prayer Caravan drove several neighborhoods of that working-class community, part of Brasilia's Federal District. The caravan and volunteers stopped at 12 specific stops to reach out and pray with people while following social distancing recommendations.



REMOTE SCHOOL DOUBLES ENROLLMENT AFTER GETTING COMPUTER LAB

Salacuum Adventist School recently doubled its enrollment thanks to a new computer lab on campus. It is the first school in the small village of Salacuum, located in a mountainous coffee-growing region of central Guatemala, to have computers for its students. The new lab has 20 desktop and laptop computers. The word of these computers spread quickly throughout the community, resulting in higher enrollment at the school. According to Boris Max, school principal, the school “went from 53 students last year to 108 [this school year].”



ADRA SUPPORTS THE BIRDS AND BEES TALK FOR TEENS

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in India, with support from Reckitt Benckiser, a consumer goods company, is set to launch a two-year program for 10- to 19-year-olds called *The Birds and Bees Talk*. The program is composed of 27 courses in an innovative and engaging curriculum designed to address the information gap around young people's reproductive and sexual health.



ADVENTIST CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES CELEBRATES 110 YEARS

On March 13, despite facing COVID-19 pandemic challenges, the first Seventh-day Adventist church in the Philippines remembered God's guidance during their 110th anniversary. During the special service, church members and leaders of the Santa Ana church commemorated the humble beginnings of the church and where the Lord has led them in this generation.



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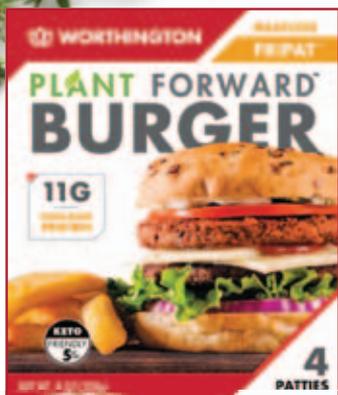
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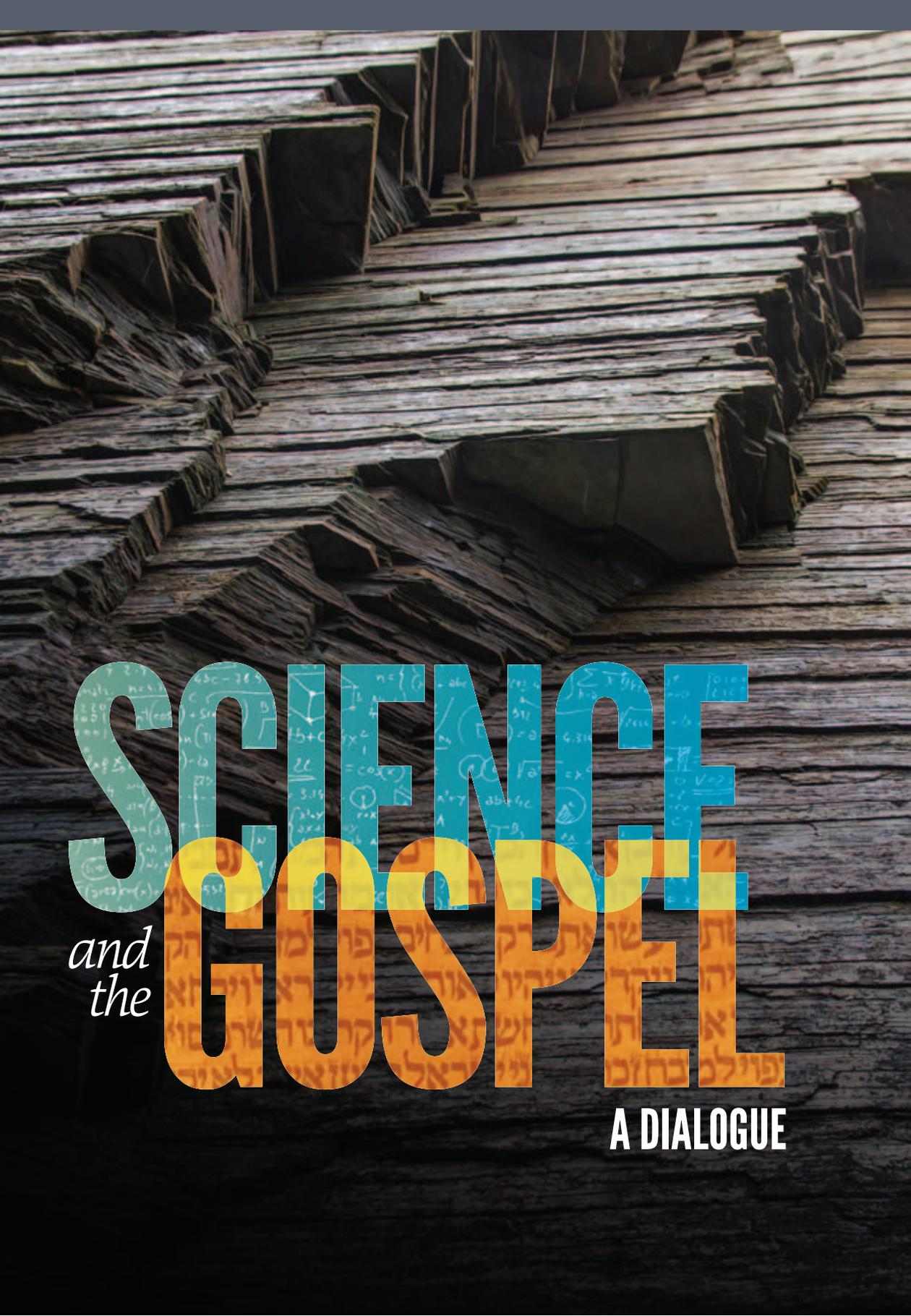
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A DIALOGUE

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INTRODUCTION: THE DIALOGUE OF GOD TALK

What does the “everlasting gospel” (Rev. 14:6) of the three angels’ messages (verses 6-12) have to do with science-theology dialogue? In this dialogue, do science and theology undermine each other or support each other? As a framework for answering these questions, I’ll offer the following broad descriptions of science and theology.

First, in addition to being an academic discipline, theology (Greek: *theos, logos*) is God talk. God talks to us through Scripture and nature; and we talk to Him in prayer and talk about Him with words or actions (which speak louder than words).¹ Second, science (Latin: *scientia*, knowledge) includes the academic disciplines of formal, natural, applied, social, and theological sciences. Many “thoughtful scientists and philosophers have recognized the correlation of academic disciplines, and the potential unity of science and the humanities.”²

From this perspective a person may be professional in some sciences and amateur in others. In addition, it is evident that we are all involved with science and theology on some level and, therefore, can engage in science-theology dialogue to some degree.

FROM PREMODERN TO POSTMODERN DIALOGUE³

As we wrestle with questions about the gospel and science-theology dialogue, let us consider the biblical instruction to “remember the days of old, [and] consider the years of many generations” (Deut. 32:7).

In the premodern period theology was queen of the sciences because the church founded the universities where science was cultivated. At times there were conflicts between traditional theology and new discoveries in science. However, some essential assumptions of modern science may be traced back to the premodern period, when theology provided the context for the development of the scientific method.

In the modern period various sciences became mature, and natural science was regarded as king of the sciences. Many ceased thinking of theology

as a science and trusted science as the solution to all human problems. Nevertheless, Friedrich Schleiermacher (the father of modern theology) defined theology as a positive and practical science.⁴

In the postmodern period many scholars recognize that there are serious limits to both science and theology, and that both can be used for good or for evil. Some persons respond to this by cultivating anti-science and anti-theology attitudes. Others respond by proposing that science dialogue can minimize their potential for evil and maximize their potential for good.

It is important to note that premodern, modern, and postmodern perspectives currently coexist. While some persons identify exclusively with the values of one perspective, we should recognize the positive and negative features of each approach. Rather than premodern theology as queen or modern natural science as king, we need a biblically informed postmodern strategy for science-theology dialogue.

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL: A CALL TO DIALOGUE

Science-theology dialogue should be informed by Daniel’s message about God’s “everlasting kingdom” (Dan. 4:3), which is described by Jesus as the “gospel of the kingdom” (Matt. 24:14) and by John as the “everlasting gospel” (Rev. 14:6). This gospel undergirds all aspects of the three angels’ messages: the judgment hour, worship of the Creator, Babylon’s fall, the mark of the beast, the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus (verses 6-12).

The gospel is not irrelevant for science-theology dialogue, since Jesus says, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18-20).⁵ We catch a glimpse of the extent of this authority when we consider the scientific calculation that the universe is 93 billion light-years wide—the distance light travels in 93 billion years at 186,000 miles per second.⁶ That is a lot of universe for science and theology to dialogue about; and the gospel promises eternal life (1 John 2:25), which allows time for everlasting cosmic explorations.

Therefore, we will understand science and theology more completely when the gospel kingdom

“The current postmodern period presents a challenging and exciting opportunity for science-theology dialogue.”

“shall break in pieces and consume all . . . [other] kingdoms” (Dan. 2:44) so that “the saints” “possess the kingdom” (Dan. 7:18). Nevertheless, we can also engage with the dialogue now, since God’s “kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,” existing “from generation to generation” (Dan. 4:3), and “the Most High rules in the kingdoms of men” (verse 17). Furthermore, God’s “kingdom . . . is within” us (Luke 17:21), guiding our participation in science-theology dialogue.

DARING TO DIALOGUE LIKE DANIEL?

Valuable insights are contained in the instruction given to Daniel to “shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; [when] many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase” (Dan. 12:4). Daniel desired knowledge about historical events and their timing (Dan. 8:14; 9:24-27; 12:5-13), leading up to when “Michael shall stand up” and God’s people “shall be delivered” (Dan. 12:1). In contrast to Daniel, we can now look back at events that he desired to see: for example, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus (1 Peter 1:10-12).

God uses this increased knowledge to enhance our efficiency in sharing the gospel. As shown to Daniel, “none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand” (Dan. 12:10); and the “wise” are “those who turn many to righteousness” (verse 3). Like Daniel, they will “rest” in death and then “arise” to their “inheritance at the end of the days” (verse 13), to “shine like the brightness of the firmament,” and “like the stars for ever and ever” (verse 3). Even now, “the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day” (Prov. 4:18).

The benefit of increasing historical knowledge parallels the benefit of an increase in all kinds of knowledge. This was demonstrated when “God gave” the Hebrew youth “knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams” (Dan. 1:17). They were “gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand” “the language and literature of the Chaldeans” (verse 4).

In our science-theology dialogue, we must reject

“what is falsely called knowledge” (1 Tim. 6:20). At the same time, our dialogue is encouraged by the fact that with God’s help (Dan. 1:17) the Hebrews graduated from the university of Babylon “ten times better” than others “in all matters of wisdom and understanding” (verse 20). Clearly God is not intimidated by increasing knowledge; and His people should not be intimidated by it either.

DIALOGUE UNTIL HE COMES

Jesus taught “parables” on the “mysteries of the kingdom” (Luke 8:10), which include the “gospel” “mystery” (Rom. 16:25). As we contemplate science-theology dialogue, we should consider the “parable” in which Jesus corrected people who “thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately” (Luke 19:11). Jesus instructed them to “do business till I come” (verse 13).⁸

The business this kingdom parable encourages includes the business of increasing knowledge through the spiritual gift of scholarship.⁹ As Jesus said on another occasion: “Every scribe [or scholar] instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old” (Matt. 13:52). This teaching is relevant for motivating every student in our schools, from kindergarten to university, including our Sabbath Schools.

Genuine science-theology dialogue is motivated by Advent hope. We should always “be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matt. 24:44). We really have no time to focus on figuring out how much time we have left to get ready. Redemption draws near at the speed of now! “Now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed” (Rom. 13:11). Therefore, the authentic Adventist is committed to doing kingdom business as if Jesus were returning today to evaluate our science-theology dialogue.¹⁰

DIALOGUE THAT MAKES LAODICEA HOT

Ellen White points out that one cause for Laodicean lukewarmness (Rev. 3:14-22) is intellectual laziness. “‘What need is there,’ say they,

'of an increase of knowledge . . . ?'" This explains it all. They feel that they are 'rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.'¹¹ Nevertheless, "the book of Daniel is now unsealed," and "by the *increase of knowledge* a people is to be prepared to stand in the latter days."¹² "Every grain of knowledge is to be regarded as of high value"; and Christians "should improve every moment to *increase their knowledge*."¹³

This increase of knowledge includes science-theology dialogue, since "a knowledge of science of all kinds is power, and it is in the purpose of God that advanced science shall be taught in our schools as a preparation for the work that is to precede the closing scenes of earth's history. The truth is to go to the remotest bounds of the earth, through agents trained for the work."¹⁴ "In the study of the sciences also we are to obtain a knowledge of the Creator. All true science is but an interpretation of the handwriting of God in the material world."¹⁵

Genuine dialogue avoids a false science that places satanic "ideas of science and nature" above God's Word. Similarly, it avoids a false theology that ignores the "connected chain of truth" and manifests "a disjointed medley of ideas" supported by Bible texts "woven together into a tissue of falsehood."¹⁶ Those who study nature and Scripture should learn from each other. "The book of nature and the written Word do not disagree; each sheds light on the other. Rightly understood, they make us acquainted with God" and lead to "intelligent trust in His Word."¹⁷

Today, as in the time of Daniel, students "rooted and grounded" in faith should enter "leading institutions" with "a wider field for study," "different classes of minds," and "popular methods of education," and "theology." This would prepare them "to labor for the educated classes," to correct "errors of our time," and "do a good work, even while gaining their education, in sowing the seeds of truth in other minds."¹⁸ Clearly we are not to be lukewarm about science-theology dialogue. We are to be on fire to preach the gospel in a way that is relevant in our science-dominated culture.

CONCLUSION: GROWTH IN GRACE AND DIALOGUE

In summary, many Christians are involved with science and theology; and the current postmodern period presents a challenging and exciting opportunity for science-theology dialogue centered in the everlasting gospel. Daniel predicts an end-time increase of knowledge; and Jesus calls scientists and theologians to dialogue until He comes. This dialogue helps overcome Laodicean lukewarmness and facilitates the finishing of our mission. So let us not shun science-theology dialogue. Instead, let us enthusiastically engage in this dialogue as we "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior" (2 Peter 3:18), "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). ▀

¹ See Roger M. White, *Talking About God* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 1-10.

² Valentine Belfiglio, *Correlations Between the Physical and Social Sciences* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2011), p. 7.

³ Martin Hanna, "The Use of Science in Theology" (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 2004), pp. 17-46, discusses this issue.

⁴ See Stanley Grenz, "'Scientific' Theology/'Theological' Science: Panenberg and the Dialogue Between Theology and Science," *Zygon* 34, no. 1 (March 1999): 159-166.

⁵ Jonathan Pennington, *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 193-216, considers this question.

⁶ Neil deGrasse Tyson, Michael A. Strauss, J. Richard Gott, *Welcome to the Universe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. 17-25, cite these overwhelming numbers.

⁷ On which, consider Jacques Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2000), pp. 13-23.

⁸ Earnest van Eck has this, and much more to say, in *The Parables of Jesus the Galilean* (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade, 2016), pp. 276-299.

⁹ Martin Hanna, "The Spiritual Gift of Scholarship," *Current: Faith Meets Life and Culture* 3 (2015): 46, 47.

¹⁰ Martin Hanna, "Who Is an Authentic Adventist?" *Current* 8 (Fall 2020): 21, 22.

¹¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 5, p. 265. (Italics supplied.)

¹² Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958, 1980), book 1, p. 105. (Italics supplied.)

¹³ Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases* (Silver Spring, Md.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1981), vol. 13, p. 145. (Italics supplied.)

¹⁴ Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1923), p. 186.

¹⁵ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890, 1908), p. 599.

¹⁶ Ellen G. White in *Signs of the Times*, Mar. 27, 1884.

¹⁷ White, *ibid.*

¹⁸ E. G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 583, 584.

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SCIENCE and the GOSPEL



MAKING FRIENDS IN THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY



BY BEN CLAUSEN

One often hears of conflict between religion and science or that creationists are anti-science. This article rejects such mindsets and presents another perspective about looking for the good even in people we may disagree with. Antagonism between good and evil exists, but as Nobel laureate Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn says: “The line separating good and evil passes . . . through every human heart.” This article is about looking for the good. As George Vandeman wrote on what he liked about other churches,¹ this article emphasizes what to like about scientists having other viewpoints.²

Darwinism has its theological and scientific problems,³ but Charles Darwin was more than

just his theory, as were Charles Lyell, James Hutton, and other founders of geology who enjoyed positive affiliations with Christian colleagues. Darwin was close to his devout Christian wife. In his *Autobiography* he said that early on Milton’s *Paradise Lost* was his favorite during his world voyage on the *Beagle*. However, he found it difficult to believe that a God of love was the source of everlasting punishment, parasitism, and the death of his child from typhoid. Like everyone else, scientists seek answers to the big questions. We can appreciate our shared humanity and all work together in mutually fulfilling ways.

Consilience can be expected in studying nature and revelation, for God is the author of both. Modern science developed within a Judeo-Christian culture and many of the founders of science were Christians, studying nature as God’s handiwork in order to glorify God.⁴ This article describes the experiences of dedicated Christians doing good science within a welcoming scientific community, as suggested in other recent church articles.⁵

RESEARCH EXPERIENCES

After attending only Seventh-day Adventist schools through a master’s degree in geology at Loma Linda University (LLU), I was not sure

Do good science, study large-scale geology, recognize human limitations, and always love others.

what to expect when accepted for a final degree in nuclear physics. During the first social event with my major professor, Jerry, I offered prayer before we ate. I was occasionally scheduled for tests on Saturdays and experimental runs at the Los Alamos particle accelerator that worked 24/7; however, Jerry went out of his way to accommodate my religious beliefs.

While at the Geoscience Research Institute (GRI), I was invited to work in the carbon-14 laboratory at University of California, Riverside (UCR), for a year. During that time I took a geology class in which the professor scheduled all the geology field trips on Saturdays. When asked about alternate options, he said I would just fail without doing field trips. I told him I would do my best because I was in the class to learn, not for a grade. Although everyone's situation may not be resolved so easily, I was top in the class and able to work around Saturday field trips with the professor's blessing.

The following quarter I took an advanced class studying granite-like rocks from a different UCR professor, but the same teaching assistant. She had already talked to Doug, and without my even asking, they arranged all the field trips for weekdays. At the end of the quarter I asked Doug if he had any research I could assist with. He gave me a massive geochemical data set from southern California granitoid rocks and said, "See what you can do." I have worked with this professor and data for almost 20 years, resulting in several peer-reviewed articles,⁶ and thanks to Lance, a former student, we continue our research and publishing.

My research with Doug led to many other research collaborations: an American Geophysical Union fellow, chairs of the Geological Society of America "granitoid/volcanology" section, and geologists from Colombia, Chile, Mexico, Zambia, India, and China. Greg, a California Institute of Technology alumnus, was a committee member for LLU Ph.D. student Luciano. Greg has been with us to Peru twice for geology fieldwork. Our research group has numerous stories of collaboration and friendship, but I will focus on one.

OUR GEOLOGIST FRIEND

Thanks to Ana, an LLU geology student from Colombia, I extended my research about California granitoids to Peru. The first poster comparing our research in California and Peru was presented at a geology conference in Avila, Spain.

When I displayed our poster, Scott, a well-known geologist at the University of Southern California, expressed interest in our Peru research. I thought it would be great to work together; however, the next day he was concerned after a web search on my name found an association with creationism. I assured him that I was eager to do good and careful science and gave him my curriculum vitae with a couple dozen nuclear physics publications from working at particle accelerators in the United States, Canada, the Netherlands, and Russia. We were mutually intrigued by our shared science interests. We quickly recognized in each other kindred spirits and someone with whom we could be friends.

A couple years later we invited him and his wife, Vali, to work with us in Peru. We had worship in the morning, prayer before meals, and rest on the Sabbath. We had an excellent week together. While there, Scott encouraged us to get radiometric ages from our rock samples. As a result, we have worked many times at a prominent radiometric dating facility and measured hundreds of uranium-lead ages. Geologist and lab manager Mark and the other lab assistants have always gone out of their way to work with us.

During a GRI field conference for church administrators in the Alps, I asked Scott for suggestions as to what a scientist might tell church leadership. His comments were: "Science is not out to destroy faith, for they can be compatible; the church will be left behind if it shuts its door to science; Ben's research group has an open door to the scientific community; don't do pseudoscience."

We have had many philosophy discussions and are especially intrigued by the "two books" approach of studying God through both nature and the Bible. He thinks the teachings of Jesus serve as a valuable guide for human interactions.

We have talked about Galileo, theodicy, the 2016 U.S. election, Sabbath rest, the complex geologic record, and why I am a Seventh-day Adventist.

Over the years he has suggested various reading materials. One book⁷ has short stories about the Tower of Babel, creation by God's word, elegance in design, the book of Job, and hell as the absence of God. *Omphalos*,⁸ a short story in a bestselling book by the same author, is about a creationist's prayers and tree rings indicating a very recent creation. Recently other recommendations include a book by an evangelical author,⁹ a web article about a Christian environmentalist,¹⁰ and another about a leading evangelical speaker.¹¹

Several years ago Scott and I agreed to write a joint letter about our collaboration for an online geology discussion group. His summary of our work together was: We have become good friends and trust and respect each other. We are doing a lot of great science research funded in part from church sources. Scott's life has been enriched by kind and thoughtful people in Ben's church. Ben has been a "portal" to his church community for young people from all over the world who believe in God and want to learn about science. We continue to learn to communicate through ongoing discussions and shared ideas.

Because of our work with Scott and Vali, Ana spent three years doing postdoctoral research with them before becoming a geology professor at LLU.

FINDINGS

An in-press book chapter¹² suggests ways of dealing with conflict between geology data and the Genesis record and between science and religion: learn from history, know the issue, do good science, study large-scale geology, recognize human limitations, and always love others.

In doing geology research, we take clues from the Genesis record. We are looking at the worldwide picture: horizontally with plate tectonics, vertically with the geologic column, and in time with radiometric dating. Our research group is finding what the geology community already

knew: water is important in geologic processes, geologic rates can vary, and isotopes tell about more than just age. We publish papers in the standard geology literature¹³ and have been asked for more. Our research aims to benefit both the scientific and church communities and encourage the next generation of scientist Christians.

A recent article¹⁴ describes some lessons learned, with not being obnoxious as perhaps one of the bigger ones. Jesus came, not to conquer the Romans, but to win hearts. He welcomed the outsiders to Jewish society: a Roman centurion, Samaritan and Syrophenician women, tax collectors, and lepers. Our purpose is to study and share about a powerful God in control of nature and a good God with blessings for all. ♣

¹ George Vandeman, *What I Like About...* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1986).

² E.g., L. A. Taunton, *The Faith of Christopher Hitchens: The Restless Soul of the World's Most Notorious Atheist* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2017).

³ E.g., Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁴ Ben Clausen, "Can a Scientist Also Be a Christian?" *Dialogue* 7, no. 3 (1995): 8-10, <https://dialogue.adventist.org/165/can-a-scientist-also-be-a-christian>.

⁵ Leonard Brand, "Kindness? Or Set Them Straight?" *Adventist Journey*, 4, no. 3 (March 2021): 4-6, <https://www.nadadventist.org/news/kindness-or-set-them-straight>; Timothy Floyd, "Not Lost, Just Searching," *Adventist Review*, February 2021, pp. 34-36. "No one usually comes to Jesus because they lost an argument; they come because His love draws them."

⁶ <https://bclausen.net/>.

⁷ Ted Chiang, *Stories of Your Life and Others* (New York: Penguin, 2002).

⁸ Ted Chiang, "Omphalos," *Exhalation* (New York: Knopf, 2020), pp. 237-269.

⁹ Timothy Keller, *Making Sense of God* (New York: Penguin, 2016).

¹⁰ K. K. Ottesen, "An Evangelical Scientist on Reconciling Her Religion and the Realities of Climate Change," *Washington Post*, Mar. 2, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/an-evangelical-scientist-on-reconciling-her-religion-and-the-realities-of-climate-change/2021/02/26/f757d1c2-40b7-11eb-8bc0-ae155bee4aff_story.html.

¹¹ Ruth Graham and Elizabeth Dias, "Beth Moore, a Prominent Evangelical, Splits With Southern Baptists," *New York Times*, Mar. 20, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/10/us/beth-moore-southern-baptists.html>.

¹² Ben Clausen, "Respecting God's Word, God's World, and People in God's Image," in L. J. Gibson, R. Nalin, and H. M. Rasi, eds., *Design and Catastrophe* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2021), pp. 180-183.

¹³ See <https://bclausen.net/>.

¹⁴ Ben Clausen, "What Adventists Have to Share With the Scientific Community," *Dialogue* 30, no. 3 (2018): 10-14, <https://dialogue.adventist.org/3065/what-adventists-have-to-share-with-the-scientific-community>.

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NATURAL SELECTION, DARWIN, AND THE BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

NOEMÍ DURÁN

We tend to associate *natural* with *good*. A natural lifestyle, eating natural food, and natural remedies are all presented as superior to anything processed and artificial. After all, the word *natural* comes from nature, and nature is good, isn't it?

“NATURAL” AND “TRANSMUTATION OF SPECIES”

There is a term, widely used in biology, that also contains the adjective *natural* and that for many people is also a good thing. It is *natural selection*. Natural selection relates to the “struggle for existence” coming from observed differences in survival and reproduction, with organisms best adapted to their environment producing more descendants. Life is seen as a constant competition in which natural selection ensures that only the “fittest” win, while the weak and the clumsy fall by the wayside. If the qualities responsible for the survival or demise of certain individuals come from the genes they possess, natural selection

results in the best genes remaining in the population while the deficient genes are eliminated. Thus, some would say, even if the means are a bit harsh, the end is the improvement of the species, and therefore the unflinching, unfeeling elimination of unfit organisms by natural selection is justified, a kind of natural good.

This was the view of Charles Darwin, the scientist most associated with the concept of natural selection. Although he was neither the first nor the only one to propose the idea, Darwin spread it throughout the academic community of the nineteenth century via his famous 1859 book *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. One of the main tenets of this book was to establish natural selection as the agent responsible of the “transmutation of species,” the slow and progressive change that turned one species into a different one by accumulation of adaptive variations over time. Although not mentioned in the

title, Darwin's second goal was to argue in favor of common ancestry for all organisms. He connected common ancestry and natural selection together by assuming that natural selection could accumulate small beneficial changes over millions of years into large evolutionary changes. His concluding paragraph clearly shows Darwin's conviction that natural selection and its effects on earth were something absolutely good:

"There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been and are being evolved."¹

In the second edition of *The Origin*, published in 1860 only a few months after the original, Darwin added a short phrase to the paragraph, which then read:

"There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed *by the Creator* into a few forms or into one . . ."²

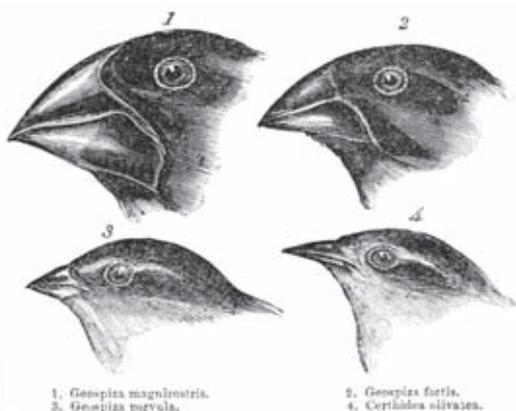
NATURAL SELECTION AND "BY THE CREATOR"

According to historians and the testimony of Darwin himself,³ this addition does not reflect Darwin's regret at presenting a purely materialistic theory that left out the Creator, but was rather an attempt to placate the enormous criticisms that the first edition had received from different religious sectors. That was not unexpected. Long before publishing his book, Darwin was fully convinced that the diverse forms of life were not God's designed creation but the product of a blind, undirected natural process. His core ideas were already formulated in the notebooks he wrote in the 1830s based on his observations during the voyage of the *Beagle*. However, when he shared his ideas with his deeply religious wife, Emma, along with some of his scientific colleagues, Darwin soon realized how difficult the acceptance of his theory would be in a Christian society. That is one reason *On the Origin of Species* took a long time to write and ended up as a thick and ponderous book: Darwin spent



We find many evidences of how the creation was and how it should be.

more than two decades compiling supporting evidence and forging alliances with respected scientists of his time. The book launch went more or less as expected. All copies were sold in a single day and generated a great deal of controversy. Along with scientific critiques, his religious materialism drew serious criticism. Darwin decided to make some rhetorical concessions for the second edition, but the materialistic essence remained unchanged. Natural selection was the mechanism responsible for accumulating changes; it endured as the true creator making *endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful*, while God was relegated to a secondary



role, if any.

Darwin defined himself as an agnostic,⁴ explicitly rejecting the Bible's divine inspiration, so his ideas were consistent with his stance toward religion. Today, however, there are Christians who claim to be Bible believers and state that Darwin's materialistic theory is completely compatible with biblical teachings. According to them, God used natural selection to create and thus, because natural selection was God's means of creation, it is both *natural* and *good*.

But this is not what is written in the Bible. It is true that the Bible describes nature as good. In Genesis 1 God Himself evaluates different components of His creation and certifies six times that they are *good*. Then in verse 31, when His work is

complete, He reaffirms his verdict by assessing the creation as *very good*.

So, yes, nature was good . . . before Genesis 3. After that, not so much. At the very moment of the Fall, when Adam and Eve decided to disobey God, they condemned the rest of creation to suffer the curse along with humanity; nature's goodness was tarnished by the consequences of sin. One of the first consequences, readily apparent when reading the text, is a shift in priorities within the human mind. In *Patriarchs and Prophets* Ellen White states that Adam ate the forbidden fruit out of love for Eve, but a short time after the bite, he was blaming her, and God Himself, for the transgression.⁵ This same transformation from selflessness to selfishness soon spread to the rest of nature, and that was the very moment natural selection entered the world. Obviously the Bible does not specifically mention the term, but the description of subsequent events perfectly fits our current understanding of the process. Natural selection has to do with resource shortages, a fight for survival, and with death. That is the norm in nature today, but it was not the case before Genesis 3. Food was plentiful (Gen. 1:29, 30), and nothing in the text suggests any struggle, violence, or fear in the original plan. All of that came later, for it was only after sin that the earth had to be forced to bear its crops (Gen. 3:17), plants developed defenses to avoid overgrazing (verse 18), and enmity arose between humans and animals (verse 15).

NATURAL SELECTION: A CHRISTIAN'S VIEW

What then should a Christian's view of natural selection be? Is it an invention? Is it nature's great creative force? Is it good? Is it natural?

There is no doubt that natural selection exists and acts in nature. Charles Darwin devoted a large part of his book to revealing it, and we can easily see it in action in any nature documentary on the African savannah, or just looking around in a forest. Animals fight; some die. Some of them survive to reproduce. Sometimes it is because of features that help camouflage them, or help them run faster, or be more attractive. Survivors end up parenting the

next generation, and their features increase in the population. Darwin got that part right.

As an expert himself in pigeon breeding, Darwin compared the changes made by artificial selection in some animals with those observed in nature between similar species. He used his observations of the Galapagos mockingbirds and other groups of similar species to propose that geographical isolation could cause a species to adapt differently in different environments, resulting in variations of the same organism. He proposed that natural selection may cause a species to split into two or more similar species. And he was right. That idea may have surprised some people in Darwin's time who believed in the Platonic fixity of species. But today change driven by natural selection is widely accepted by scientists, evolutionists, and creationists alike. We call it *speciation*, and there is nothing in the Bible against it. Indeed, the very changes that Genesis 3 announces as consequences of sin could well be considered as a biblical reference to this process.

But that's all natural selection can do. It works only on available variations among organisms within the groups God created. It can turn one population of finches into two populations of finches with slightly different characteristics, such as beak size or feather color, but it can't turn a finch into an eagle, because finches lack characteristics of eagles for natural selection to select. How much more impossible to turn a bacterium into a human being!

Darwin extrapolated the role of natural selection to advocate for a godless nature. But it makes no sense for a Bible believer to embrace materialistic arguments that do not hold up either scientifically or theologically. According to our current understanding in biology,⁶ the changes necessary to turn one kind of organism into a different one—a bacterium into a giraffe or seaweed into oak trees—cannot happen by natural selection or by any other unguided process. In addition, those who claim that God used natural selection to make them directly contradict both the biblical record of Genesis 1 and the central message of the entire Bible. The very concept of natural selection goes against everything the Bible tells us about God. It implies competition, struggle,

selfishness, destruction of the weak, and death—all things that go against God's loving character and His selflessness.

In summary, natural selection exists and acts in nature. It can cause changes in the frequency of already-existing traits within populations and even the formation of new species within the same kind of organisms—such as wolves, dingoes, and domestic dogs, all of which are different species, yet happily interbreed. However, as a process that involves predation, suffering, and death, it should not be considered essentially good, or God's method of creation. What the Bible calls good, an environment of abundance and peaceful relationships, is exactly the opposite of a world ruled by natural selection. Natural selection was not present in the two first chapters of Genesis, and thus it was not part of God's original plan for our planet: God is love (1 John 4:16).

There is only one question left: Is natural selection *natural*? The obvious answer would be yes, because it is found in nature. Natural selection entered the world with sin and is now part of nature, but fortunately it is only a small part of it. If we contemplate the natural world carefully, we find many evidences of how the creation was and how it should be. Ecosystems function because many different organisms collaborate with each other, plants and animals help each other, and animals living in social groups show empathic and even altruistic behaviors. God created the world out of love and with love, and that is something that not even several thousand years of sin and natural selection can erase. 📌

¹ Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species: A Variorum* Peckham (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959).

² *Ibid.*

³ E. Janet Browne, *The Power of Place*, vol. 2 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 200.

⁴ <http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/what-did-darwin-believe-article>, accessed April 2021.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890, 1908), p. 57.

⁶ Ariel A. Roth, "Chance or Design? The Long Search for an Evolutionary Mechanism," *Dialogue* 12, no. 1 (2000): 9-12, 29, available at <https://dialogue.adventist.org/645/chance-or-design-the-long-search-for-an-evolutionary-mechanism>; Leonard Brand and Arthur Chadwick, *Faith, Reason, and Earth History*, 3rd ed. (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2016); Michael J. Behe, *Darwin Devolves* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2019).

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AN ORIGINS TIME LINE

Historic moments in the conversation about beginnings

RAUL ESPERANTE

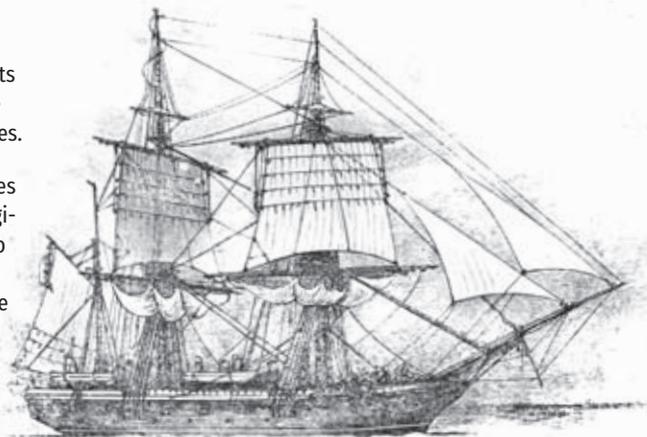
- ▶ **FIFTEENTH CENTURY B.C.** Moses, Egyptian-born Hebrew, authors the book of Genesis, becomes historian of Creation through reception and communication of divine revelation
- ▶ **FIFTH CENTURY B.C.–B.C.** Speculation of ancient Greek philosophers about naturalistic origins of matter and life, spontaneous generation of life forms through the interaction of material elements.
- ▶ **354–430** Teachings of Christian thinker Augustine of Hippo: God cannot be said to have created the universe *in* time; rather, God created the universe *with* time; God brought everything into existence in a single moment of creation: not a static creation, but endowed with the capacity to develop.
- ▶ **1485** Christian theologian Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1474): writes *Summa Theologiae*, his five proofs of God’s existence known as the Five Ways.
- ▶ **1735** Swedish naturalist Carolus Linnaeus proposes new naming system for organisms, consisting of a binomial nomenclature, or the naming of species with two names (e.g., *Homo sapiens* for humans).
- ▶ **1749** French naturalist Georges Buffon suggests that species change over time, but rejects the idea that this change can originate new species.
- ▶ **1788** Scottish geologist James Hutton publishes *Theory of the Earth*; suggests that past geological processes operated very slowly, as they do in the present; the thickness of exposed rock layers therefore indicates long periods of time (deep time).

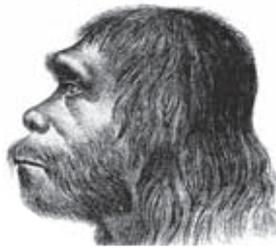


- ▶ **1794–1796** English physician Erasmus Darwin publishes *Zoonomia*, posits that all warm-blooded organisms derive from common ancestor; anticipates “survival of the fittest” idea.
- ▶ **1798** English economist Thomas R. Malthus, in his book *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, argues that human populations grow faster than resources, causing competition for food in which the lower class suffers hardship, famine, and disease more than the upper class.
- ▶ **1802** English clergyman and philosopher William Paley argues, in *Natural Theology*, that God’s design of the whole creation is evident in the complexity of the natural order of things.
- ▶ **1809** French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck publishes theory of evolution in which change occurs through inheritance (or use/disuse) of acquired characteristics passed on to next generation.



- ▶ **1813** French naturalist Georges Cuvier explains geological record as not continuous but marked by periodic extinctions caused by catastrophic floods; most recent and dramatic was Noah’s, after which the earth was repopulated by migration of animals that survived in protected areas.
- ▶ **1830** English naturalist Charles Lyell: popularizes *uniformitarianism*—earth’s geologic features better explained by action of slow, continuous, and uniform processes over deep time; also, earth is more than 6,000 years old.
- ▶ **1831** English naturalist Charles Darwin begins trip on the *Beagle* around the world, to study nature and collect samples; spends almost five years surveying the coasts and inland areas of South America, the Galapagos Islands, New Zealand, and Australia.



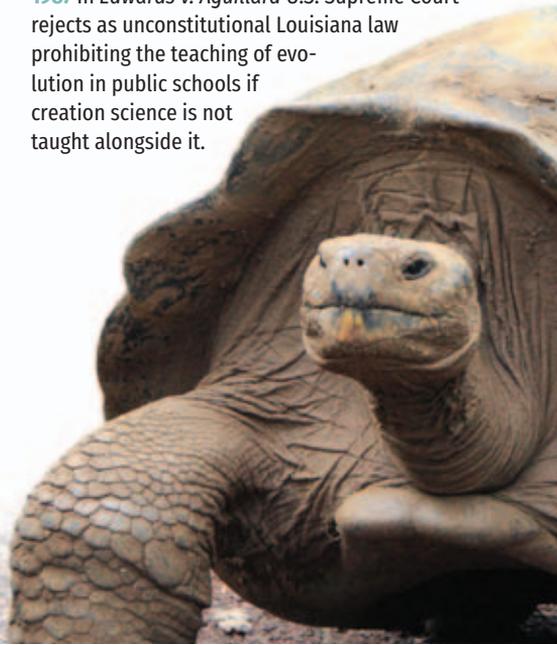


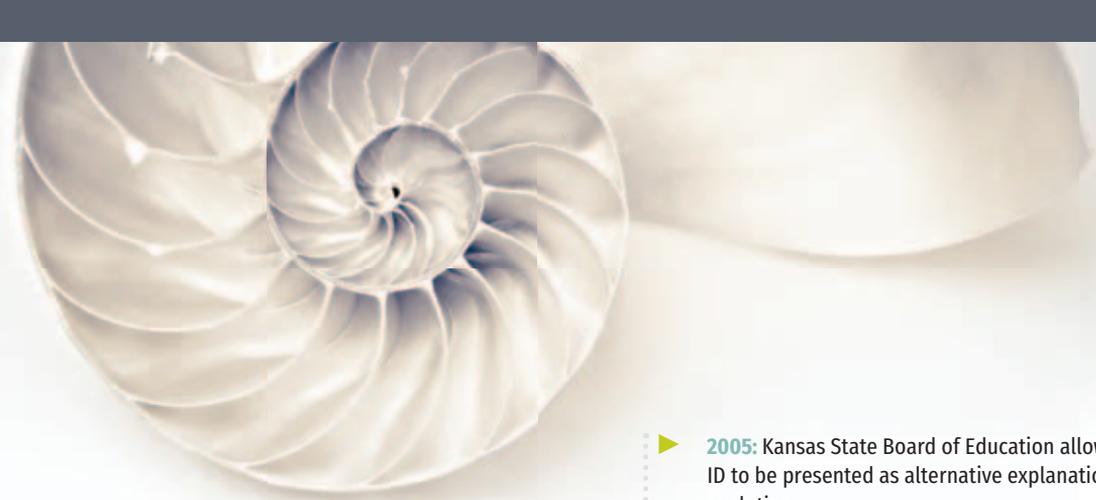
- ▶ **1856** First bones of what was labeled Neanderthal man unearthed in the Neanderthal Valley in Germany.
- ▶ **1858** English naturalist Alfred Wallace independently conceives theory of evolution by natural selection; publishes paper at the same time as Darwin.
- ▶ **1859** Charles Darwin publishes *On the Origin of Species*; key idea: all organisms evolved from common ancestor through variations and natural selection.
- ▶ **1868** German zoologist Ernst Haeckel applies Darwinian theory of evolution to embryology.
- ▶ **1871** Charles Darwin publishes *The Descent of Man*; argues that humans evolved from apes; book in which Darwin first uses the term “theory of evolution” to designate species change.
- ▶ **1870s** North American evangelists (e.g., Dwight L. Moody) launch attack on theory of evolution, arguing that it contradicts biblical truth.
- ▶ **1920s** Conservative Christian leaders: public momentum against teaching evolution in classrooms.
- ▶ **1925** In *State of Tennessee v. Scopes* public school teacher John Scopes is convicted of teaching evolution, violating state ban on the practice; conviction is later overturned on legal technicality.
- ▶ **1929** North American astronomer Edwin Hubble finds convincing evidence of expanding universe, clearly indicating that universe is finite in both time and space; universe had a beginning.
- ▶ **1958** Geoscience Research Institute (Adventist research institute) is founded to investigate scientific issues related to creation, origins, faith, and science.
- ▶ **1961** North American engineer Henry Morris and theologian John Whitcomb publish *The Genesis Flood*, a book that presents arguments in support



of the literal meaning of the Flood account in the Bible; sparks interest in geosciences from a creationist perspective.

- ▶ **1968** In *Epperson v. Arkansas* U.S. Supreme Court rules as unconstitutional Arkansas state law banning public academic teaching of evolution.
- ▶ **1970** *Institute for Creation Research* is founded near San Diego to conduct scientific research within the context of biblical creation.
- ▶ **1974** Geoscience Research Institute publishes first issue of scientific journal *Origins*.
- ▶ **1981** United States establishes National Center for Science Education to advocate for teaching evolution in public schools.
- ▶ **1982** First issue of *Ciencia de los Orígenes* (Science of Origins) is published by the Geoscience Research Institute.
- ▶ **1982** In *McLean v. Arkansas Board of Education* a federal court in Arkansas strikes down law mandating creation science teaching in public schools alongside evolution.
- ▶ **1985** Australian biochemist Michael Denton publishes *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, first major book presenting scientific attack on the theory of evolution.
- ▶ **1986** First International Conference on Creationism is held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; organized by the Creation Science Fellowship, Inc.
- ▶ **1987** In *Edwards v. Aguillard* U.S. Supreme Court rejects as unconstitutional Louisiana law prohibiting the teaching of evolution in public schools if creation science is not taught alongside it.





- ▶ **1990s** Intelligent Design (ID) theory is formulated by scientists as refutation of Darwinian theory of biological evolution; theory is based on existence of functional parts and systems in living organisms that could not have arisen by naturalistic means, but would require the intervention of an intelligent Designer.
- ▶ **1991** Philip Johnson, University of California, Berkeley, law professor, publishes *Darwin on Trial*, an incisive critique of theory of evolution.
- ▶ **1994** Answers in Genesis (AiG) established as apologetics ministry to defend Christian faith; heavy emphasis on origins.
- ▶ **1996** Lehigh University biochemist Michael Behe publishes *Darwin's Black Box—The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*; presents biochemical limits of evolution, helps launch ID movement.
- ▶ **1997** Loma Linda University biologist Leonard Brand publishes *Faith, Reason, and Earth History*; provides ideas and models for history of life and planet within framework of short age and creation.
- ▶ **1999**: In *Freiler v. Tangipahoa Parish (Louisiana) Board of Education* a federal appeals court strikes down a Louisiana law requiring public school teachers to read a disclaimer urging students to question evolutionary theory.
- ▶ **1999**: Kansas State Board of Education ruling supporting teaching evolutionary biology, but not its inclusion in statewide standardized science tests; ruling triggers wider debate over state science standards.
- ▶ **2002–2004** Adventist Church organizes multiple regional and global conferences on faith and science.

- ▶ **2005**: Kansas State Board of Education allows ID to be presented as alternative explanation to evolution.
- ▶ **2005** In *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District* a U.S. federal district court strikes down Dover (Pennsylvania) school board's requirement that term "ID" be mentioned in public high school biology curriculum.
- ▶ **2006** In *Selman v. Cobb County School District* a U.S. federal court rejects as unconstitutional Cobb County (Georgia) school board's requirement to affix a note to public school biology textbooks instructing students to think critically about evolutionary theory.
- ▶ **2006** Adventist Church establishes Faith and Science Council to sponsor relevant research in subjects related to origins; meets twice a year to study matters dealing with the inter-relationship and intersection of science and the Bible.
- ▶ **2007**: 2005 Kansas board decision is struck down
- ▶ **2014** ByDesign Science textbooks for grades 1-8 are published by Kendall Hunt Publishing and North American Division Office of Education of the Adventist Church.
- ▶ **TODAY** God, the Creator, states: "if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come" (2 Cor. 5:17, NIV)
- ▶ **TOMORROW** God, the Creator, promises: "I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind (Isa. 65:17, NIV)." 🦋



Raul Esperante is a research scientist at the Geoscience Research Institute, Loma Linda, California, United States.

HIS Impact On Me



Soraya

Former student
Holbrook Indian School (HIS)



Liked by **HolbrookIndianSchool**

10/6/18 is when my sisters and I got baptized. It's the best decision I've ever made. I went to an amazing school, met a lot of amazing people, went to church, had bible studies, sang songs, went to camp, rode horses, went bike riding, participated in sports and in Native festivities.

This was all because God lead my mama to Holbrook Indian School (HIS). My decision to attend HIS helped me so much. I'm not embarrassed to say how much I rock with God because He's done so much for me that I can't explain. God has plans. I don't know what they are but I trust Him. --Soraya via Instagram

Soraya is a singular example of the experience that many of our students at HIS have. Help other Native American children and youth experience God's amazing love by making a gift to Holbrook Indian School today at [HolbrookIndianSchool.org](https://www.holbrookindianschool.org)



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HOW ADVENTISTS BECAME CREATIONISTS

TIMOTHY G. STANDISH

Adventists and creation go together like jam and bread, but things were not always this way.

MYTHICAL VERSION

The story of how we became a Bible-believing movement dedicated to worship of our Creator and Redeemer¹ has some surprising twists. Let's start by addressing a four-part simplistic and false myth: (1) Christians had a primitive understanding of origins before Charles Darwin published his theory of evolution in 1859; (2) in the face of Darwin's irrefutable scientific arguments, almost all Christians embraced evolution and everyone believed evolution until (3) Ellen G. White had some visions that caused Adventists to reject science for the Genesis account of Creation, and (4) this misconception spread to other faiths through an amateur Adventist scientist named George McCready Price.

A MORE RELIABLE VERSION

Like so many other things associated with Darwin's theory of evolution, this particular myth is in tension with recorded history and reality. First, it is important to remember that since the time of Christ, believers dealt with theories of evolution. In fact, before there were Christians, sophisticated theories of evolution were widespread, such as the one advocated by the Roman poet Titus Lucretius Carus.² Second, Darwin's theory of evolution was published in the midst of debate over multiple theories of evolution. Around this time Christians were particularly concerned because of the inherent racism in essentially all theories of human evolution. For example,

Frederick Douglass, the great campaigner for racial equality, pointed this out when he denounced evolution five years before Darwin published his flavor of evolutionary theory:

"Away, therefore, with all the scientific moonshine that would connect men with monkeys; that would have the world believe that humanity, instead of resting on its own characteristic pedestal—gloriously independent—is a sort of sliding scale, making one extreme brother to the ourang-ou-tang, and the other to angels, and all the rest intermediates!"³

Where did Adventists come into all this? Remember that those who looked forward to Christ's second advent were a diverse group; there does not appear to have been unanimity in Creation. William Miller, whose prophecy interpretation sparked the Advent movement, favored a day-age theory in which each literal 24-hour Creation day pre-figured 1,000 years of human history. He believed that this understanding supported his prophecy interpretation that outlined Jesus' return in 1844.⁴

After the Great Disappointment of 1844, those who would later be called Seventh-day Adventists continued concentrating on prophecy and the Second Coming, particularly on how to prepare. The Ten Commandments occupied a central place in thinking about preparing, with the fourth commandment quite central to Adventist thinking. This is reflected in the very first Seventh-day Adventist periodical, *The Present Truth* (now *Adventist Review*): its first issue featured an article entitled "The Weekly Sabbath Instituted at Creation, and Not at Sinai." Emphasis on the commandments logically connected with Creation.

By 1872 the fledgling Seventh-day Adventist

The biblical record of history remains the same and eternally true.

denomination would publish a “Declaration of Fundamental Principles”⁵ that contained no specific item dealing with creation, but did acknowledge that God “created all things” through Jesus. The biblical Creation was more or less assumed, but it was not spelled out. Other denominations, particularly Catholics, were making much more direct statements in support of Creation, especially the biblical record of human creation given in Genesis.⁶

CREATIONISM IN EARLY SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM

During the first 50 years of the church there were a number of publications that reflect the very evolutionary understanding of human nature that Frederick Douglass spoke against. A shocking example appeared during 1866 in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*. Uriah Smith, the editor, declared that “the line of demarcation between the human and animal races is lost in confusion,” and offered up certain races as irrefutable proof of this.⁷ Smith wrote this during a spirited but misguided defense of Ellen White’s prophetic ministry, not as an advocate of evolution, though he still drew on the “evidence” that was being produced by “science” at the time. To support his argument, he was quick to grab and urge acceptance of a view rooted in evolutionary thought rather than the distinct creation of humans found in the biblical record. His error is clear, but we need to keep in mind that we may well be as vulnerable to this kind of mistake today as were Adventist pioneers.

The distinction of bringing biblical creationism into sharper focus within Adventism is commonly given to George McCready Price, although Ellen White was very clear about this long before him. Price was an Adventist author who wrote extensively on many topics and championed the ideas of earlier geologists who believed that the geologic column was produced by the flood recorded in Genesis 6-8. He also added ideas of his own. Price’s arguments were replaced by more current understandings today, but still influenced other Christian leaders, including Henry Morris and John Whitcomb. These fellow Christians brought original ideas and profes-

sional expertise to the table, influencing a wide group of believers who worship the Creator God.⁸

Neither the idea that Price was simply promoting what Ellen White wrote, or that he stood alone, is supported by contemporary literature. *The Fundamentals*—famous essays that established the term “fundamentalism” as descriptive of authentic conservative Christianity—were being written at the very time that Price was most active, during the first half of the twentieth century. The authors of those essays held diverse views on Creation, but among them were firm believers in the biblical record of Creation. One of these, Philip Mauro, authored a creationist book⁹ and participated in the Scopes “monkey” trial. Mauro contributed three influential essays to *The Fundamentals* and noted: “If the Bible does not give us a truthful account of the events of the six days recorded in its first chapter, it is not to be trusted as to any of its statements.”¹⁰

In the 1930s a list of Adventist fundamental beliefs began to appear in Adventist yearbooks. These did not contain any specific fundamental belief about Creation, although belief in a recent literal six-day creation, as recorded in Scripture, is clearly assumed, if unstated.¹¹

A CLEAR DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

A denominational commitment to Creation was evident among church leaders and members, as demonstrated by formation of the Geoscience Research Institute in 1958 and numerous publications. It was not until the 1980 General Conference Session’s voted Statement of Fundamental Beliefs¹² that the biblical creation was explicitly included as an Adventist doctrine. Wording of this fundamental belief was refined in 2015.¹³

As our church has grown, levels of education have increased and tension has bubbled up on occasion about our faith in the words God wrote with His own finger in stone about His creation of the world and life on it in six days (Ex. 31:18). This is to be expected, even though, in the midst of ever-changing and diverse scientific understandings, data continue to accrue in tension with Darwinism. While science changes and many



This illustration from the mid-1900s shows the days of Creation with the Sabbath as a focal point. As early as the 1850s, the *Review* carried articles on Creation. By the 1950s, articles increasingly included references to the reason why Creation is a primary focus for Seventh-day Adventists.

acknowledge the inadequacy of evolution as a scientific theory, the biblical record of history remains the same and eternally true.

I am proud to belong to a community of faith that embraces this eternal truth. If we truly live the Bible's teaching about Creation, it entirely changes our view of the world, our fellow humans, and our God. It steers us away from dehumanizing ideas that may have a blinding gloss of attraction to them, and serves as a guiding principle that draws us together as a community of faith, while connecting us with fellow believers in other denominations. By revealing the truth that our Creator made all things "very good" and is coming again to perform a new creation, we fulfill our mission to share Christ with the world and draw all people to Him. 🏹

¹ Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2015).

² Titus Lucretius Carus (circa 99–55 B.C.), *De Rerum Natura*, book 5, lines 416–431. *Lucretius: On the Nature of Things*, trans. W.H.D. Rouse, rev. Martin F. Smith (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992).

³ Frederick Douglass, "The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered," commencement address delivered at Western Reserve College, July 12, 1854.

⁴ William Miller, *Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology Selected From the Manuscripts of William Miller With a Memoir of His Life* (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1842), p. 170.

⁵ "A Declaration of Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by the Seventh-day Adventists" (Battle Creek, Mich.: Steam Press of the

Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1872). (Though not credited, the author was Uriah Smith.)

⁶ See, for example: Acts of the synod convened by Cardinal Johannes von Geissel, 1862 archbishop of Cologne, in response to publication of the German edition of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Published in two volumes, *De doctrina catholica* and *De disciplina ecclesiastica*, in which we find: "Our first parents were created immediately by God. Therefore we declare that the opinion of those who do not fear to assert that this human being, man as regards his body, emerged finally from the spontaneous continuous change of imperfect nature to the more perfect, is clearly opposed to Sacred Scripture and to the Faith" (as translated in Michael Chaberek, O.P., *Catholicism and Evolution: A History From Darwin to Pope Francis* [Kettering, Ohio: Angelico Press, 2015], p. 73).

⁷ Uriah Smith, "The Visions—Objections Answered," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 28, no. 9 (July 31, 1866): 65.

⁸ Henry M. Morris, *History of Modern Creationism*, new updated edition (Santee, Calif.: Institute for Creation Research, 1993); Henry M. Morris, John C. Whitcomb, *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and Its Scientific Implications* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1961).

⁹ Philip Mauro, *Evolution at the Bar* (Boston: Hamilton Bros. Scripture Truth Depot, 1922).

¹⁰ Philip Mauro, "Life in the Word," *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth* (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, 1910–1915), Vol. V, chap. 1, p. 27.

¹¹ Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1931), pp. 377–380.

¹² Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1981), p. 5.

¹³ Ed Zinke, "What Got Changed in Fundamental Beliefs: A Look at Some of the Statements That Were Revised and Why" *Adventist Review*, July 8, 2015, retrieved from: <https://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story2975-what-got-changed-in-fundamental-beliefs>, December 27, 2020.

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INSPIRING CREATOR WORSHIP

A bird's-eye view of the beginnings and growth of Creation Illustrated

TOM ISH

Upon graduating from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1980, I dreamed of writing for *National Geographic*. God had a different plan.

Honing editing and writing skills with several newspapers while searching for a greater purpose eventually led me to the Adventist message, working in ministry, and ultimately publishing *Creation Illustrated* magazine. Readers have called this “the Christian answer to *National Geographic*!”—dreams and prayers fulfilled.

Not so fast. This journey started during rebellious teenage years working and recreating outdoors, professional ski patrolling, cycling across the United States, touring Europe with a backpack, and yearning to share my heartfelt awe of nature. Nearly two decades of regular exposure to God’s creation unknowingly planted seeds in every furrow of my soul to rescue me from transcendental meditation and evolutionary teachings—a process of *re-creation*.

Nature’s balm continued to apply deep, soothing restoration through watercolor painting while closely examining the wonders of God’s handiwork. Committed to serving God as a team, my wife, Jennifer, and I realized that people of all ages, church and unchurched, need the same *get-away* to nature and creation—to behold His wonders and to be transformed. Hence, *Creation Illustrated* launched in 1993 to provide readers a balance of mental, spiritual, and physical enrichment that leads to restoration and

inspires worship of the Creator—the first angel’s message.

CREATION EDUCATION

Soon Christian educators in schools and homeschools embraced *Creation Illustrated* as a teaching tool. The study guide included in each quarterly edition helped them glean facts, research, and Scripture from articles, but even more so the transformational character-building object lessons. Why? Because this is Christ’s method of teaching eternal truths through the things He made. “All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables, . . . ‘things kept secret from the foundation of the world’” (Matt. 13:34, 35).

For example, the plants created on day three contain a factory that takes in the bad (carbon dioxide) and gives off the good (oxygen) that we depend on for every breath we breathe. Astoundingly, that day the Creator also designed the implement of His torture—the tree upon which He was crucified—to also take in all the bad on earth (sin) and give off only good (eternal life). Furthermore, Scripture reveals the green leaves are for the healing of the nations (cf. Rev. 22:2). And as if that were not enough, our bodies are designed to ingest plant leaves which eventually turn to blood, muscle, and bone cells to sustain our health.

That’s three powerful Creation object lessons in one short paragraph. Image the wealth of wisdom, scientific facts, and spiritual enrichment packed into 110 editions illustrated with stunning images. Now

add more than a dozen downloadable creation unit studies that focus on one creature or aspect of creation, with lessons in history, science, Bible study, geography, math, art, and activities. Quickly teachers, parents, and students respond with favor.

“The unit studies and magazines exhibit high scientific standards that support Scripture. This material is used throughout the curriculum,” wrote Marian Baker of the Wyoming Valley Seventh-day Adventist Elementary School, Pennsylvania, who (along with more than 3,500 Adventist schools and teachers in the North American Division) receives a free print and digital subscription and quarterly unit studies funded by donations and grants to our nonprofit ministry.

Why is Creation education so vital? Many youth leave the church after academy and high school. Some of the reason appears to be exposure to evolutionary teaching at the college level.¹ Technology and social media addiction also rob students of nature exposure, leading to depression, poor fitness, and even suicide. Yet a University of Michigan study demonstrates that just 20 minutes a day of nature exposure (in person or in print) increases memory by 20 percent!²

PRISON MINISTRY

Prisoners surrounded by cement and steel also suffer from “nature-deficit disorder.” Pallets of donor-funded copies of *Creation Illustrated* reach prison ministries to share in gift bags with profound transformational impact. “As far as I’m concerned, that magazine was the best item in that bag. I read every word, and the pictures are amazing. I love how it explains nature and how it relates to God and all He created,” wrote Connie R. from the Dayton Correctional Institution in Ohio. “I have a hard time comprehending sometimes, but this magazine was easy to read and learn from.” Weekly requests from prisoners for more copies reveal their desire to become a new creation in Christ Jesus.

OUTREACH TOOL

A universal attraction to nature makes *Creation Illustrated* easy to share. Retired nuclear chemistry

professor Ivan Holmes, who taught at Andrews and La Sierra universities and helped launch the *Origins* academic publication with the Geoscience Research Institute at Loma Linda University, told us that *Creation Illustrated* fills a great need because it is for everybody and is a top-quality publication worth sharing.

Other businesses and hospitals use *Creation Illustrated* to reach community members of all faiths and backgrounds. “*Creation Illustrated* is the only magazine we allow in our banks,” insists Denzil McNeilus of Sterling State Bank in Minnesota, who gives a gift subscription to around 100 employees for the holidays. Other denominations also utilize the publication. One Baptist minister bought 15 special-edition back issues on the seven days of Creation to give to his Sunday School teachers for use in their classes.

THE POWER OF CREATION

The bottom line? At *Creation Illustrated* we herald that God is still the Creator. He can create in each of us a new heart instantly. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

Perhaps E. J. Waggoner said it best in his 1893 book called *The Gospel in Creation*. “The gospel, then, is simply the creative power of God applied to men. Any gospel that leaves creation out, or which does not preach the creative power of God, as seen in the things that He has made . . . is another gospel, which is simply no gospel at all, since there can be no other.”³

You and I are the greatest evidence of Creation! There is nothing more powerful than the testimony of a transformed life. It cannot be disputed. There is just no debate. 🦋

¹ Michael Lipka, “Why America’s ‘Nones’ Left Religion Behind,” *Pew Research Center*, online at <http://pewrsr.ch/2bOZAJk>.

² “Going Outside—Even in the Cold—Improves Memory, Attention,” online at <https://news.umich.edu/going-outsideeven-in-the-coldimproves-memory-attention/>.

³ Ellet Joseph Waggoner, *The Gospel in Creation* (London: International Tract Society, 1893), p. 47. Online at <https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/1390.32#145>.

Tom Ish is editor and publisher of *Creation Illustrated* magazine, based in Spokane, Washington, and can be found at WorshipOurCreator.com/ar.

SCIENCE AND FAITH

ARTHUR CHADWICK

The great success science has achieved during the past two centuries has resulted from one fundamental principle that underlies this discipline: experimentation. Science is at its best when the investigator can experimentally test variables one at a time.

In historical geological research, direct experimentation can rarely be done to test ideas. Instead, we must think of all possible explanations for what we observe, then try to eliminate those that seem less likely by comparing the ideas with the data. Experimental re-creation of past events is not possible, since so few of the conditions are known. Thus, we are reduced to creating a possible scenario as an explanation.

I share this so you can better appreciate the issues that challenge our understanding when it comes to what we can know about Noah's flood. There are no addressable eyewitnesses we can ask. Scientists must rely on interpretation of



Why we need both to believe.

indirect, consequential data for an event that is not reproducible, is worldwide in scope, occurred a long time ago, and for which there are no modern counterparts. We are additionally challenged to derive from these data information about a world that no longer exists and that was very different from the world we know today in ways that we cannot properly fathom.

Indeed, conception of that world might be impossible if it were not for the existence of a secondhand eyewitness account recorded in Genesis 6-8, as well as other support in Scripture. Jesus recognized the authority of the Genesis account (Luke 17:26, 27). Paul repeatedly asserts the fall of a literal, perfect Adam (Rom. 5). These scriptures are reliable witnesses to real events. In 2 Peter 3:3-6 we are told that Creation and the Flood were real events that scoffers would deny in the last days. This prophecy is fulfilled abundantly in the philosophy of modern naturalistic geology which denies God a role in Creation and the Flood.

HELP IN UNDERSTANDING

We hold to three crucial positions that inform our view of Scripture and affect our faith commitment to our Creator.

1 Be content without having answers to all of your questions. As scientists, if we had all the answers, we would be out of business. It is the challenging, unanswered questions that provide the impetus for us to continue. Early in my career I was challenged to discover meaningful questions to answer. Now, later in my career, I have many unanswered questions, far too many to answer in what remains of my time on earth. Am I unhappy? No, I am delighted with the answers I have, and happy to pass the unanswered questions to others. Being willing to live a life of faith while continuing to seek answers is the privilege of believers in Christ.

2 Recognize that all answers science offers are tentative. Science is based upon a methodology that involves human reasoning. Because humans are limited in time and space and have

restricted realities, human logic is limited, flawed, and prone to error that can become permanently entrenched. As scientists, we try to arrive at the best conclusions, but the possibility that we are wrong is real. Consider the following example.

Early in the twentieth century a German meteorologist, Alfred Wegener, proposed that the surface of the earth was mobile, and the Americas were at one time part of a larger land mass, including Africa, Europe, Australia, and Asia. His ideas, supported by an abundance of data, were largely ignored. In the mid-1960s geologists proposed an explanation involving moving continents, and his idea began to gain traction. By the 1980s only a few diehard geologists had failed to convert to the new worldview, now referred to as “plate tectonics.” When these geologists died or retired, plate tectonics achieved domination. This was a completely new way to view the earth, entirely incompatible with the previous science.

3 Whatever our decision about origins, we cannot demonstrate it based on science alone. When reduced to essentials, there are only two competing worldviews on origins: the Creation Model (all living kinds created in six literal days; a few thousand years ago) or the Standard Model (evolution of life itself; all living forms, covering billions of years). You might think it would be easy to discriminate between these two views, but it is not. Both views are working in the domain of past history, and it is difficult to develop reliable scientific data.

If one considers the current state of molecular biology, the Standard Model lacks a coherent explanation for the complexities of even the simplest cell, and thus fails as a model. Some scientific theories challenge the Creation Model, and some challenge the Standard Model. No one, layperson or scientist who knows the science can say that all the science favors one model. How then do we decide our position on origins if science cannot be the sole determinant? This is where we as scientists can appeal to something outside the boundaries of science, such as our philosophy or

Being willing to live a life of faith while continuing to seek answers is the privilege of believers in Christ.

religious experience. We should acknowledge this, and carefully evaluate our position. Doing this will go a long way toward protecting us from passive acceptance of a popular model.

UNDERSTANDING THE TRUTH IN GENESIS

Three contributions to modern science help our Adventist understanding, while remembering that commitment to any model will always be a matter of faith.

1 Origin of life without an Originator is the single most difficult problem that adherents to the Standard Model must confront. The earliest scientific theories on how life originated date to the nineteenth century. These theories were developed in the absence of detailed knowledge of the complexity of the cell. Since then we have learned that life, even in its most basic form, is far more complex than what these early advocates understood.

2 The complexity of life forms shows design at a level inconceivable to Darwin and generally ignored by conventional proponents of the Standard Model. This evidence, which is deep and pervasive in all living systems, supports the Creation Model, but challenges the Standard Model.

3 The earth's crust contains a record of processes consistent with a global catastrophe. It is widely recognized that the layers of rock on the earth's crust are the results of catastrophic action, but this is rarely admitted because of a concern that this would play into the hands of creationists, who expect catastrophic events. The amount of time available to those who invoke the Standard Model is multiple orders of magnitude greater than the time available to those who wish to support the Genesis accounts. This ought to make some discernible difference in what can happen and what can be seen. When one factors in a catastrophe of the magnitude recounted in Genesis, it would appear that the geologic action must have been on a scale many times faster than that invoked by the Standard Model.

One criterion would be to look for evidence of

time. If a geologic event results in the deposition of a layer of sediment, the Standard Model tells us that time passed between that event and the deposition of the next layer. The geologist might ascribe a period of millions of years to the deposition of a set of beds. Dividing the thickness of the beds by the time of deposition gives a time per unit thickness in the Standard Model. These figures often are in the centimeters per thousand years range.

Sediment is rarely stationary for long. It can be eroded by currents or burrowed by organisms. Estimates based upon modern sedimentary environments suggest that within an hour to a year, all of the sediment will have been reworked by burrowing to a depth of several centimeters so that none of the original internal sedimentary structure remains. A careful study by Leonard Brand and his colleagues determined that the sediments were rarely disturbed after deposition, and thus that the evidence for passage of time was absent. This is counter to what the Standard Model predicts, but entirely consistent with a global catastrophe in a short time.

CONCLUSION

At this point science cannot tell us which account is correct. There are too many details that are unknown or unknowable. Data from the ratios of radioisotopes, as generally interpreted, supports a long period of time for life on this earth. Study of the sediments themselves seems to indicate that these interpretations are wrong, that sediment accumulation rates appear to have been very fast. The complexities of living organisms and the absence of any credible model for the production of such complexity demand a supremely intelligent Creator.

While we still have many questions, we have more than sufficient grounds for commitment, and we have the assurance we are not alone in our attempts to learn more. The God who called us into existence has commissioned us to be witnesses to His Creatorship (Isa. 43:10). This is His commission to us personally as we continue our walk with Him. 📌

Arthur Chadwick is a research professor of biology and geology and codirector of the Dinosaur Science Museum and Research Center at Southwestern Adventist University.

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SCIENCE
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MIND AND COSMOS



Why am I conscious of my purpose?

LEONARD BRAND

A few years ago, respected philosopher Thomas Nagel wrote a fascinating book, *Mind and Cosmos*.¹ Nagel is an atheist who has been influenced by the writings of the Intelligent Design advocates, and is convinced that materialism (naturalism) and neo-Darwinism are almost certainly false. He recognizes there are too many things that are not explained by that philosophical system. He has decided that the arguments for intelligent design by Michael Behe and Stephen Meyer deserve to be taken seriously, and have not been treated fairly by the scientific community.² Nagel is still an atheist, but he recognizes that something big is missing in contemporary scientific orthodoxy.

SEEING RED

Nagel then focuses on the specific failures of modern scientific thinking in its attempts to explain the existence of qualities in nature that seem to require a mind as part of their origin. These qualities would include our thinking ability, sophisticated sense perceptions, consciousness, and values. How could evolution explain these? He begins his illustration of this with some down-to-earth examples, including our perception of the color red. When light with a wavelength of 620-740 nanometers (700 billionths of a meter) reaches our eyes, it stimulates photoreceptor cells, and these send a signal to the brain. That signal traveling along the visual nerves is not a color, but only electrical impulses. Then where does the color red come from? The color red does not exist until the nerve signals reach the brain and the brain *generates* the sensation we know as the elegant color red.³

Color-blind persons do not see all the same colors the rest of us see. A color-blind person's color-generation system is faulty, and a wavelength of 640 nanometers does not result in the color red. The brilliant color red does not exist except as an animal's brain generates that color, using the software put there by the Creator. The same is true of

the sound of a Beethoven symphony, the rich smell of orange blossoms in the spring, or the color of a peacock's tail. These sensory signals, as we perceive them, exist only when they are invented in an animal's brain. Are chemistry and physics alone adequate to explain how brains and their wonderful sensory abilities came to be?

KNOWING SELF

Another quality that Nagel focuses on is consciousness. We not only see red flowers, but know that we are seeing them. We think about red flowers, and are aware—conscious—that we are thinking about them. We ponder the nature of God and how He made the color red, and we are conscious of all of this thinking process. We don't just respond like a machine to our environment—we are conscious of our place in nature, and of what the end of our lives may mean.

Nagel discusses two levels of questions that are involved in this search for understanding of ourselves and our place in nature. One question is the physical nature of consciousness and free will. Biochemically, what is the mechanism of these qualities? How do they work? Does the physical structure of the nerve connections in our brain explain why we are deeply thinking beings, conscious of ourselves, our thinking ability, and our values? The second question: What is there in the physical cosmos that would cause evolution to produce beings with these features that seem to be marvelous luxuries, way beyond what is necessary for survival? This question is perhaps the more significant one. Would all of that conscious awareness improve our ability to escape from a lion if we were just an evolved animal? That seems doubtful.

According to materialist (naturalistic) modern science the laws of physics are the underlying explanation for everything, including the emergence of mind and consciousness, through evolution. Nagel has come to doubt that, because there is too much that speaks to the centrality of mind

It takes the Spirit of God to soften us until we are ready to accept an influence from outside of ourselves.

(and thus design) and its impact on explanations of the most important features of reality. He concludes that our explanations of the natural world will be adequate only if we recognize that “mind, rather than physical law, provides the fundamental level of explanation of everything.”⁴

But when it comes to filling out this insightful concept, he stumbles. He discusses theism and creation, and concludes that theism could be the missing puzzle piece that explains the existence of our perceptions, cognition, and consciousness, but he rejects that explanation, as he also rejects modern materialism. He rejects materialism because its answers are not convincing. Theism is rejected because it is not a complete logical scheme in itself, but requires that something (God) be inserted from outside of our intellectual system. He argues elegantly for the failure of materialistic Darwinism, and that a different system is needed, a system that begins in some way with mind. But here he still stumbles, and does not have a satisfactory alternative to offer. He does offer an alternative, but we may not all find it meaningful.

EXPLAINING EVERYTHING

Nagel concludes that there are essentially three ways to explain all these things that we find to be so marvelous. One: they could have arisen by *chance* (neo-Darwinism). Two: they could be the result of *intentionality* (God or some other being created them). Three: he suggests that the explanation could be *naturalistic teleology*, a natural tendency in the cosmos to move toward purpose, to make things with a cause for their existence. Perhaps, he suggests, there are naturalistic “teleological laws” in the universe that would guide evolution to make structures and organisms that have a purpose.⁵

Nagel rejects the first option, *chance*, because its explanations are inadequate. He rejects the second, *theism*, because it depends on explanations that come from outside of our intellectual system. Although Nagel doesn’t embrace *naturalistic teleology* with enthusiasm, he recommends it as no less logical than the materialistic alternative, and because it has the possibility of offering explanations without

recourse to divine creation. He does not discuss the difficult question of how or why those “teleological laws” would have come into existence. Nagel does suggest that the origin of the cosmos must involve “mind,” but since he doesn’t accept the Creator, he is left scratching for what this “mind” is.

ALLOWING FOR MORE

The human spirit has a tendency to desire answers that come from within ourselves. As a child reaching for something on a high shelf, we want to do it ourselves. It takes the Spirit of God to soften us until we are ready to accept an influence from outside of ourselves. Nicodemus was drawn to the young prophet Jesus (John 3:1-21), but at first Nicodemus still thought his Jewish ceremonial religion was enough. Jesus spoke directly to that problem, and Nicodemus gradually came to realize that the important answers are not present in unaided human reasoning or religious practice. Those answers come from the divine source of mind and salvation.

Our salvation results from accepting the free gift of God’s loving hand reaching out to lift us up. In the same way, our understanding of the universe, of origins, and of our intellect, sensory perceptions, and our consciousness and values will be accurate and complete only when we accept the answer that begins outside of our human intellectual system—the answer that begins with “and God created.”⁶

¹ T. Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is Almost Certainly False* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

² M. J. Behe, *Darwin’s Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: Free Press, 1996); M. J. Behe, *The Edge of Evolution: The Search for the Limits of Darwinism* (New York: Free Press, 2007); S. C. Meyer, *Signature in the Cell* (HarperOne, 2009); S. C. Meyer, *DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design* (HarperOne, 2009).

³ L. Brand and E. Schwab, “The Rainbow Is All in Your Head,” *Dialogue* 18, no. 2 (2006): 11-13.

⁴ Nagel, p. 21.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁶ Pray for Thomas Nagel, that he will make that crucial last step in his search for understanding.

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A TOXIC LEGACY

*Why creation care matters
for Bible believers*

WILLIAM K. HAYES

The flyer announcing a community meeting at the nearby church caught her attention. Like other neighbors, Jennifer Hall-Massey, the mother of two young teenagers, had noticed a change in her well water several years prior. It had become gray, cloudy, oily, and foul-smelling. Toilets, bathtubs, and washers had developed rusty stains. Her younger son had suffered painful skin rashes after bathing in the water. Enamel in the teeth of her older son had eroded away.

Jennifer had her suspicions. Her younger brother had died the year before from a brain tumor, but at the community meeting she learned that six neighbors in a 10-house span had also suffered brain tumors. Soon surveys revealed additional ailments, with the community experiencing exceptional rates of gallbladder disease, fertility issues, miscarriages, kidney and thyroid problems, and cancer. Jennifer—as well as 30 percent of others in the community—eventually had her gallbladder removed.

What happened? Prenter Hollow, a small community less than 17 miles from West Virginia's capital city, had been poisoned. Coal mining companies had injected nearly 2 billion gallons of coal deposits and slurry into abandoned mine shafts just a few miles away. The deposits contained more than 10 times the legally allowed concentrations of arsenic, barium, lead, and manganese. All these chemicals showed up in tests of the local well water.

Coal and the industry that mines it are the lifeblood of West Virginia's economy, so state authorities were reluctant to challenge the immense political and social influence of the industry. Multiple companies responsible for the pollution openly reported their transgressions but denied any link to the water problems and were never even fined.¹

Sadly, the problem of polluters and the consequences of pollution are hardly unique to West Virginia. As many as 100,000 violations of the Clean Water Act² occur each year in the United States, with fewer than 3 percent resulting in fines or other significant punishments.³ Research sug-

gests that one in 10 Americans is exposed to dangerous chemicals in their drinking water, and up to 20 million fall ill each year from contaminated water.⁴ And this happens in a developed country with relatively strict environmental protections.

A TOXIC LEGACY

Today we live on a planet full of pollutants that we create and distribute. We inhale them in the air we breathe. We consume them in our food and water. They permeate and affect our bodies in ways we barely understand.

Consider air pollution. The vast majority of pollutants derive from energy use and production, including vehicles, factories, power plants, and incinerators. The resulting smog (ground-level ozone) and soot (particulate matter) irritate the eyes and throat and cause life-threatening injury to lungs. Mercury, lead, dioxins, benzene, and other toxic emissions damage the nervous, immune, endocrine, and reproductive systems. Carbon dioxide and methane elevate the earth's temperature, which exacerbates smog formation and alters the climate. Currently nine out of 10 people worldwide breathe dangerously unhealthy air.⁵ Air pollution kills an estimated 7 million people each year,⁶ including 66,000 in the United States.⁷

Consider water pollution. Agriculture damages our precious but finite waterways more than any other source, as rainfall washes fertilizers, pesticides, nitrates, animal waste from livestock operations, and deadly pathogens into our waterways. Sewage and wastewater from our homes, businesses, and manufacturing add to the toxic brew. Oil seeps into the water from oil wells, industrial use, drippage from millions of vehicles, and tankers at sea. Mercury and other toxic chemicals have now penetrated the most remote regions of our oceans. Unsafe water sickens about 1 billion people each year and kills nearly 2 million.⁸

Consider household pollution. Inefficient household cooking creates the biggest problem, accounting for roughly 4 million of the 7 million annual deaths from air pollution.⁹ Some chemicals we inter-

act with daily and assume to be harmless cause more subtle problems. Their accumulation in our bodies has been associated with numerous health issues, including reduced sperm counts and quality.¹⁰

Collectively, pollutants kill an estimated 9 million humans each year, accounting for roughly one in every six deaths.¹¹ They also wreak havoc on other parts of God's creation—the plants, animals, and delicately balanced ecosystems that God provided to sustain us. Ocean pollution, for example, kills an estimated 1 million birds and 100,000 sea mammals each year.¹² Sadly, much of this toxic legacy could be avoided if we committed ourselves to taking better care of God's creation.

SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT THE PRESENT CREATION?

While many Christians today hold an elevated view toward the original creation, they often express indifference toward the present creation. Some argue that God permits us to exploit resources that are essentially inexhaustible, and that scientists and environmentalists grossly exaggerate the fragility of our planet and its resources. God, however, has given no room to doubt: "I brought you into a fertile land to eat its fruit and rich produce. But you came and defiled my land and made my inheritance detestable" (Jer. 2:7, NIV). In spite of this clear rebuke, many Christians have largely stood idle while nonbelievers have taken the lead in creation care.

Clearly, healthy humans need healthy environments. That alone should justify our efforts to become better stewards of God's creation. Nevertheless, we should endear ourselves to creation care for at least three additional reasons. First, the Bible clearly implores us to (see Gen. 2:15; Zech. 11:2, 3; Rev. 11:18). Second, caring brings us into communion with God (Job 12:7, 8). And third, we gain economic benefits by protecting essential ecological services, such as the provisioning of clean air, food, water, and construction materials; regulation of plant and human diseases; protection against extreme weather; and decomposition and detoxification of wastes.¹³

Clearly, healthy humans need healthy environments.

POLLUTION AND HEALTH DISPARITIES

Tragically, the poor and impoverished usually bear the brunt of problems that arise from unhealthy environments. Individuals and corporations often conduct business in ways that exploit the environment and diminish its capacity to sustain local communities. Wealthy nations often benefit at the expense of developing nations. More than 90 percent of pollution-related deaths occur in developing countries.¹⁴

As Christians we should have the loudest voices in defending the victims of environmental injustice. We have a moral imperative to identify these victims, listen to their needs, and extend a helping hand.

In the words of an influential Adventist: “In slighting the claims of the poor, the suffering, and the sinful, we are proving ourselves traitors to Christ.”¹⁵

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT POLLUTION?

As individuals, we have several means of reducing exposure to pollutants. Those of us who have the options can choose clean areas to live, consume organic produce, drive more efficient vehicles, eschew plastic packaging, and support environmental protections. Individuals, however, have limited ability to change the ways of polluters, so coordinated effort is needed—and this is best accomplished by government actions.

Governments can effect change by two principal means: enacting fiscal policies that shift behavior toward healthier, more sustainable practices; and enacting regulations that reduce pollution, increase monitoring, and punish violators.

Many Christians believe, however, that environmental regulations excessively burden businesses and are much too costly to implement. But the facts suggest otherwise—that inaction may be more costly. Researchers estimate that welfare losses resulting from pollution comprise a staggering US\$4.6 trillion per year, representing more than 6 percent of global economic output.¹⁶ In the United States alone net benefits of environmental regulations have exceeded \$200 billion each year since 1980, summing to more than \$8 trillion total.¹⁷

In the absence of government policies, how safe

can we really be? A benevolent government seeks to protect the health of its citizens through policies that include oversight and compensation.

Change simply cannot happen without the public caring; indeed, it seems, without public outcry. Somehow we need to find our voices to support efforts for change.

TO NEVER THIRST AGAIN

For those who believe in the Bible, Jesus is the ultimate solution to pollution. Speaking to a woman at a well, He said, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst” (John 4:13, 14, NIV).

With that promise, we can look forward to the day when toxic water and recalcitrant polluters will no longer threaten our health and be on our minds. Until then, we are tasked to ensure that God’s creation supplies us, and all of God’s creation, with the next best thing—clean air, healthy land, and pure water. ♣

¹ Charles Duhigg, “Clean Water Laws Are Neglected, at a Cost in Suffering,” *New York Times*, Sept. 12, 2009, <https://tinyurl.com/e3usb5zy>; see also, <https://tinyurl.com/556dbkce>.

² <https://www.epa.gov/laws-regulations/summary-clean-water-act>.

³ Duhigg.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ World Health Organization, “9 out of 10 People Worldwide Breathe Polluted Air, but More Countries Are Taking Action,” May 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/yf5pt274>.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ I. C. Dedoussi et al., “Premature Mortality Related to United States Cross-State Air Pollution,” *Nature* 578 (2020): 261–265.

⁸ P. J. Landrigan et al., “The Health and Economic Benefits of Climate Mitigation and Pollution Control,” *Lancet* 391 (2018): 462–512.

⁹ World Health Organization.

¹⁰ U. Mann et al., in *Current Opinion in Urology* 30 (2020): 296–301; see also, L. G. Kahn et al., in *Lancet Diabetes Endocrinology* 8 (2020): 703–718.

¹¹ *The Lancet* Commission, October 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/5ase4jeu>.

¹² United Nations Environment Programme, “Marine Litter: Trash That Kills,” 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/39nmxxrr>.

¹³ R. Costanza et al., “Changes in the Global Value of Ecosystem Services,” *Global Environmental Change* 26 (2014): 152–158.

¹⁴ *The Lancet* Commission.

¹⁵ Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 137.

¹⁶ *The Lancet* Commission.

¹⁷ Landrigan et al.; see also U.S. Office of Management and Budget, 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/afn7j6fj>.

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ON THE COVID “HOME STRETCH”

Let's make it to the finish line!

Q: During the past few months I've gained some weight and have become more sluggish, achy, and stiff. I follow a reasonable vegetarian diet and restarted my walking routine, getting more than 10,000 steps a day consistently over the past three weeks. Still, I am not as I was a year ago. What else can I do?

A: Without knowing your actual situation and medical history, we can give only general advice. Check with your doctor to be sure no medical issues are involved. That said, during the pandemic the average person surveyed has had a 15- to 29-pound weight gain, reportedly because of stress, less exercise, more sitting, and more snacking. You're not alone.

“Normalizing” oneself through dietary adjustment, appropriate exercise resumption, and effective stress management is wonderful. Yet an easily overlooked factor is stretching—a beneficial part of overall conditioning or reconditioning regimens.

If you're like many people these days who find it increasingly difficult to reach items on the top shelf or in the lowest kitchen cupboards, or ache when they have to turn their heads to look back to parallel-park or to see cars in the lane next to them, then stretching may be the answer. (Yes, we know there are intelligent cars that will park for you and indicate whether something is behind or on the side of you!)

Some simple stretches can improve your function and flexibility, ease your aches and pains, and even improve your balance and prevent falls. Stretching is not just for athletes; it's for all who want to get in shape or become fit, especially after the COVID “sit-and-stare disease.”

Enter your stretching routine a few minutes into your walk, just when you break a sweat, and then repeat it after you're finished. Warm muscles are more relaxed and more pliable than cold ones, so warm up and then stretch.

For specific muscles or muscle groups, gentle



stretching to the point of tension, then holding them in position for 15 to 30 seconds, allows the muscles, tendons, and ligaments time to accommodate to the stretch reflex. **Caution: Don't overstretch, and don't force the muscle to remain contracted. Stretching should be felt but not painful.**

Stretch systematically at least four times per week; once today and then again “whenever” will be ineffective. Safe, regular repetition over time will give results.

For professional help, a physical therapist can assess your muscle strength, posture, and flexibility and tailor-make your routine.

Stretching keeps the muscles flexible, strong, and healthy, and we all need that flexibility to maintain good muscle function and joint range of motion. Without stretching, muscles shorten and become tight, and when called on for activity they're weak and unable to extend all the way. This increases the risk for aches, strains, and muscle damage.

While you're at it, why not stretch your mind on God's Word too? Knowing God intimately is essential on the “home stretch”! 🦋

Peter N. Landless, a board-certified nuclear cardiologist, is director of Adventist Health Ministries at the General Conference. **Zeno L. Charles-Marcel**, a board-certified internist, is an associate director of Adventist Health Ministries at the General Conference.



THE POWER OF THE WILL

Examining the Importance of a Submitted Will

ELLEN G. WHITE

There are those who profess to serve God, while they rely upon their own efforts to obey His law, to form a right character, and secure salvation.

TWISTED THINKING

Their hearts are not moved by any deep sense of the love of Christ, but they seek to perform the duties of the Christian life as that which God requires of them in order to gain heaven. Such religion is worth nothing. When Christ dwells in the heart, the soul will be so filled with His love, with the joy of communion with Him, that it will cleave to Him; and in the contemplation of Him, self will be forgotten. . . .

Do you feel that it is too great a sacrifice to yield all to Christ? Ask yourself the question,

“What has Christ given for me?” The Son of God gave all—life and love and suffering—for our redemption. And can it be that we, the unworthy objects of so great love, will withhold our hearts from Him? Every moment of our lives we have been partakers of the blessings of His grace, and for this very reason we cannot fully realize the depths of ignorance and misery from which we have been saved. Can we look upon Him whom our sins have pierced, and yet be willing to do despite to all His love and sacrifice? . . .

The inquiry of many a proud heart is, “Why need I go in penitence and humiliation before I can have the assurance of my acceptance with God?” I point you to Christ. He was sinless,

and, more than this, He was the Prince of heaven; but in man's behalf He became sin for the race. "He was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12, KJV).

But what do we give up, when we give all? A sin-polluted heart, for Jesus to purify, to cleanse by His own blood, and to save by His matchless love. And yet men think it hard to give up all! I am ashamed to hear it spoken of, ashamed to write it.

GOD'S BETTER OFFER

God does not require us to give up anything that it is for our best interest to retain. In all that He does, He has the well-being of His children in view. Would that all who have not chosen Christ might realize that He has something vastly better to offer them than they are seeking for themselves. Man is doing the greatest injury and injustice to his own soul when he thinks and acts contrary to the will of God. No real joy can be found in the path forbidden by Him who knows what is best and who plans for the good of His creatures. The path of transgression is the path of misery and destruction.

It is a mistake to entertain the thought that God is pleased to see His children suffer. All heaven is interested in the happiness of man. Our heavenly Father does not close the avenues of joy to any of His creatures. The divine requirements call upon us to shun those indulgences that would bring suffering and disappointment, that would close to us the door of happiness and heaven. The world's Redeemer accepts men as they are, with all their wants, imperfections, and weaknesses; and He will not only cleanse from sin and grant redemption through His blood, but will satisfy the heart-longing of all who consent to wear His yoke, to bear His burden. It is His purpose to impart peace and rest to all who come to Him for the bread of life. He requires us to perform only those duties that will lead our steps to heights of bliss to which the disobedient can never attain. The true, joyous life of the soul is to have Christ formed within, the hope of glory.

A SUBMITTED WILL

Many are inquiring, "How am I to make the surrender of myself to God?" You desire to give yourself to Him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery

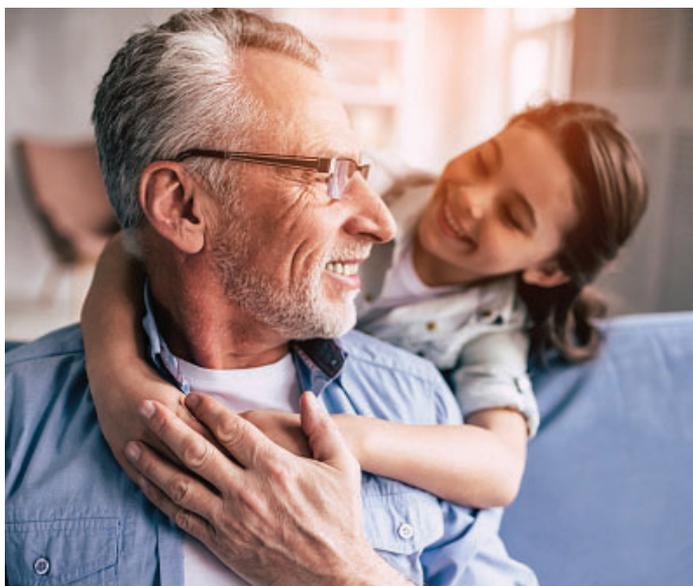
**You cannot change your heart,
you cannot of yourself give
to God its affections; but you
can *choose* to serve Him.**

to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life of sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections. The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity, and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you; but you need not despair. What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can *choose* to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him.

Desires for goodness and holiness are right as far as they go; but if you stop here, they will avail nothing. Many will be lost while hoping and desiring to be Christians. They do not come to the point of yielding the will to God. They do not now *choose* to be Christians.

Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in your life. By yielding up your will to Christ, you ally yourself with the power that is above all principalities and powers. You will have strength from above to hold you steadfast, and thus through constant surrender to God you will be enabled to live the new life, even the life of faith. ▀

Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry. This excerpt was taken from *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), pp. 44-48.



DON'T LOOK AWAY

Seeing and being seen

Faces have always fascinated me. I remember watching people intently as a wide-eyed child sitting in a shopping cart in a supermarket while my mother pondered the vegetables or fruits needed for the following week. In a pre-smartphone or -tablet world I never needed any toys or other entertainment when I was able to watch people around me.

I was not alone. Scholars tell us that few visual impressions can be compared to humans' interest in faces. In a Ph.D. dissertation defended at the University of Oslo, Norway, researcher Olga Chelnokova studied how our visual system is able to direct attention to the most important information in a face. "We are very curious about others' faces; we read stories in them and evaluate their aesthetic value," says

Chelnokova. Looking at an attractive face triggers a physical response creating feelings of pleasure comparable to enjoying tasty food or the recognition that we just won the lottery.*

We all have struggled with our inability to see and "read" real faces in the brave new world of COVID-19 during the past 14 months. Face masks have taken center stage; emotions are difficult to communicate and to discern as eyes have become the only visible real estate in the face of a conversation partner standing six feet away from us.

FACING GOD

We are told in Scripture that no one can see God and live (Ex. 33:20). God's holiness and human sinfulness do not go together, for the entrance of sin changed how we are able to relate to the Creator. Adam and Eve tried to hide from God after they had eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As they heard the sound of the Lord walking in the Garden of Eden, they sought to conceal themselves. The mere thought of trying to hide from the Creator God by moving behind some trees or vegetation is ludicrous and illustrates the complete loss of connection between humanity and their Creator.

But God's love driving His longing for His creation cannot be stopped by thick brushes, seemingly impenetrable, lush forests, or even face masks. "Where are you?" (Gen. 3:9) rings through the ages as God knows our yearning for redemption and our hunger for love and acceptance. *Where are you?* is

not an informational question in the Genesis narrative. It's a vocal attempt of God to reach the lost—and reconnect them to a new reality that ultimately requires a re-creation and a new beginning.

THE BLESSING

Numbers 6:22-27 is one of the most well-known texts in the book of Numbers. It is used in synagogues and churches and is part of Christian lectionaries. It represents a liturgical and theological highlight in Israel's formative period of camping at Sinai. The three poetic lines of increasing intensity found in verses 24-26 describe the nature of the blessings that the priests are to pronounce over Israel. It's one way of God to reconnect to His people, who have gone astray like lost sheep:

"The Lord bless you and keep you;

"The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you;

"The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace."

Each line is governed by a divine verbal action followed by a concrete manifestation. When God blesses us, He keeps us safe. Making His face shine (or smile) upon us really promises us grace; and when He lifts up His countenance upon us, we will finally get what we so desperately yearn for: we will find *shalom*, "peace."

In the Old Testament, causing one's face to shine upon someone expresses favor, pleasure, and benevolence (cf. Ps. 67:1; 119:132). Lifting up one's countenance (or, literally, face) describes the concrete action of turning and looking toward someone or something (as in 2 Kings 9:32). Figuratively it can communicate acceptance and favor (Job 11:15; 22:26). When God looks at His children, they will finally find peace. In the priestly blessing of Numbers 6:22-27 this final phrase of the blessing indicates the point of arrival. Wholeness, well-being, and peace are the results of the divine presence in our lives. We are finally close enough to rest in His *shalom*—in spite of our continuing struggles and challenges. We can rest in Him because He smiles on us, not because of a quality we have brought to the table, but rather because we have finally also turned ourselves to Him, savoring the kindness and love we can read in His face.

Verse 27 concludes this section by telling us that every time a priest pronounces this blessing,

Wholeness, well-being, and peace are the results of the divine presence in our lives.

God's name is put figuratively on those receiving the blessing. Putting one's name on someone or something suggests ownership. We finally belong.

TURN TOWARD THE BLESSING

Many of the famous medieval paintings found in awe-inspiring cathedrals in Europe depicting God and His works in Scripture show us a God who often scowls, glares, or frowns. Granted, what He sees in our lives is often disappointing and inadequate. But this is *not* the picture of the Word who became flesh to seek and save the lost.

When Philip asked Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us" (John 14:8), the answer he received was instructive not only for the disciples listening to the Master, for it also points us in the right direction. "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip?" Jesus says. "So how can you say, 'Show us the Father?'" "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (verse 9).

Can we see the face of the Father in Jesus? Do we recognize God's merciful and just character described in Exodus 34:6, 7 when we see Jesus healing lepers, raising the son of widow, playing with children or engaging kindly with His audience—even when they seek to trip and trap Him? Do we see God when we remember Jesus hanging on the cross to suffer the agony of the second death so that we can live forever with Him?

I enjoy looking at the smiling faces of people who love me and care for me, for they offer me a tiny reflection of the God who makes His face shine upon me and lifts up His countenance upon me and promises me His *shalom*. So, bask in His goodness and kindness and peace; and whatever you do, don't look away. ▀

* University of Oslo, "Why We Look at Pretty Faces," *Science Daily*. Nov. 10, 2015, online at <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/11/151110102344.htm>.

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THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

Executive or spokesperson?

LORON WADE



Well, Mario, it seems they have put you out of the church here on earth; but don't worry, you are not out in heaven." The kind woman spoke these words with a trembling voice and eyes brimming with tears. She was suffering, as all of us were, because we had just voted to dis-fellowship¹ this young man whom we all loved.

CHURCH AUTHORITY: ENGAGING THE QUESTION

Our pastor called her over. He said: "I know you have good intentions, but I am really concerned about what you said to Mario. Remember what Jesus said: 'Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven' [Matt. 18:18]."²

In anguish she responded, "Yes, Pastor, but I have known this boy since he was born. He grew up in the church. I can't believe God is going to reject him now just because of what the church voted."

"We all love Mario, and you know better than anyone how we tried to work with him, and how much patience we have had."

"Yes, Pastor, I know, but we are all sinners. I just don't see how human beings could actually have the right to shut the doors of heaven on anyone."

"So how do you think we should interpret Jesus' words?"

She turned and, still weeping, left quickly.

CHURCH AUTHORITY: IN AND OUT

What light can we find in the Bible on this matter of church authority?

Jesus compared the church to a sheepfold. He was concerned because some of His sheep were still not in the fold. He said, "I must bring them also" (John 10:16). The walls of the sheepfold, the standards and doctrines of the church, stand as barriers against the floodtide of evil—violence, pornography, drugs, political corruption—coming on the world today.

The sheepfold is also for identification. Its walls help put an end to fuzziness, marking a clear difference between inside and out. A sheep may be in the fold, accepting and living by church beliefs and principles, or it may not.

In Jesus' name and by His authority, the church invites sinners to enter the fold. The church is His voice in the world, and people will have to answer in the day of judgment for how they respond. Furthermore, the church, exercising that same authority,

has, with great sorrow, to separate itself from those who refuse to listen to the Shepherd's voice, rejecting His teachings and trampling on His principles.

CHURCH AUTHORITY: AN URGENT MATTER

The church at Corinth was facing a crisis: one of its members was sleeping with his father's wife. Other members, aware of it, were troubled, but didn't seem to know how to respond (1 Cor. 5:5). Emboldened by their silence, this individual believed he could enjoy the blessings of salvation while continuing to live in sin. Paul warned the members that their passivity made them accomplices. They needed to take a stand and exercise their God-given authority.

"When you are assembled, . . . and the power of our Lord Jesus is present" (verse 4): "power" here means "authority," the church's authority—not just its bishops or elders, but the church members themselves—to act in Jesus' name when it is "assembled."

"Hand this man over to Satan" (verse 5): Our "enemy the devil [Satan] prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). This man, in his false sense of security, was in danger of being devoured. Being put out of the fold, losing the church's approval and protecting shelter, could awaken him to his danger and produce in him a healthy sense of terror.

"For the destruction of the flesh" (continuing verse 5): This refers to the destruction of that blind pride, that fatal assurance, that had brought him to the condition

It is a process that begins with love and ends with mercy. From beginning to end, its purpose is redemptive.

he was in. The church's vote and rebuke would be an alarm call that could awaken him to his terrible danger.

"So that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord" (verse 5): The highest purpose of church discipline is the salvation of sinners.

A second purpose Paul mentions for church discipline is to keep one person's confusion and defiance from spreading like a deadly virus to the whole church—"a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough" (verse 6). Others infected by his presence might catch his deadly disease.

Church authority also protects the church's reputation and public image. Paul noted that "even pagans do not tolerate" such a sin (1 Cor. 5:1). "Pagans" have a sense of right and wrong. They expect to see a higher standard of conduct in the church. When they don't, they "blaspheme," or speak evil of God's name (Rom. 2:24); they feel justified in rejecting Christianity. Therefore the church must clearly repudiate this type of behavior.

CHURCH AUTHORITY: JESUS' METHOD

As the dear church mother said, we are all sinners. How can sinners judge sinners? To answer, we consider Matthew's record of Jesus' method: "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over" (Matt. 18:15). The foundation principle of Jesus' plan for church authority is love: "Love covers over a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). Love leads the lover to overlook defects and interpret the loved one's actions in the best light possible. "Love is patient, love is kind. . . . It is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. . . . [Love] always protects, always trusts, always hopes" (1 Cor. 13:4-7). Love is the first principle of our dealing with others.

We hear it in Matthew's words: "just between the two of you." If I love you, the last thing I want is for other people to know about your mistake. But love also leads me to say and do what is necessary to rescue you from danger when your salvation or someone's welfare is at risk. Note God's warning: "When I say to a wicked person, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn them or speak out to dissuade them from their evil ways in order to save their life, that wicked person will die for their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood" (Eze. 3:18). Love helps me find the right words and the right time to speak, in order to "restore [others] gently," remembering that we are all subject to temptation (Gal. 6:1).

The initial conversation may (1) clarify the situation, showing that no wrongdoing is actually involved; or (2) help the member to change their behavior; or (3) produce an impasse that necessitates going to the next level of Jesus' plan: "If they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses'" (Matt. 18:16). I may need to express my concern to "one or two others," including, perhaps, the church pastor, and ask if they will go with me. At this point they may tell me that my ideas about the problem are not right, and that I need to back off. If so, that is another way the matter can come to a happy conclusion.

If those I invite agree to accompany me, the erring person may then realize that what I said was not simply my opinion. Confrontation, intervention

by a small group, can bring the person to a sense of reality. It can lead them to overcome their pride, and reason correctly about the problem.

“If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector” (verse 17). The words “if they still refuse to listen” show that the purpose of presenting the matter “to the church” is not simply to take the final vote and remove a name from the church books. They show that the church as a whole is still appealing to the sinner for repentance and reconciliation.

The church not only needs to rebuke and counsel. We also need to listen: “Members have a fundamental right to prior notification of the disciplinary meeting and the right to be heard in their own defense, introduce evidence, and produce witnesses. No church should vote to discipline a member under circumstances that deprive the member of these rights.”³

All of these measures are designed to safeguard the church from errors and help it come to the right decision in this process. Furthermore, they make it clear that the main purpose always, always, is to bring people to salvation through grace and forgiveness. If at any stage the process has its desired effect, this is a cause for great rejoicing.

CHURCH AUTHORITY: BASIS AND NATURE

Matthew 18:18-20 is sometimes cited out of context and applied incorrectly. But read correctly, the passage thoroughly clarifies the issue of the church’s divine authority: “Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

This passage contains two amazing declarations. In addition to the statement about binding and loosing, it says that whatever we ask for we will get. Does that mean that if I ask for a yacht and a private jet, I will get them? The passage itself gives us the answer. Jesus said: “For . . . there am I with them.”

Jesus is present through His Holy Spirit. When the Spirit guides our prayers, we will not ask selfishly for things to spend on our “pleasures” (James 4:3). The Spirit-filled person will ask according to

God’s will, and “this is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us” (1 John 5:14).

This insight also applies to what takes place when the church gathers to deal with difficult cases. Jesus, through His Holy Spirit, is present. The church, therefore, is guided by the Spirit and by Scripture that was inspired by the same Spirit. Then when the church says to the sinner, “You are loosed”—you are separated from grace, you are excluded from salvation—it is true. But it is not true because the church has decided. It is true because Heaven has decided. The church is telling the sinner what God the Holy Spirit has revealed through His holy Word. God does not obey the church. The church does not wield executive authority. Its authority is that of a spokesperson who has listened and then faithfully transmits what the Spirit of Christ has given it to understand.

CHURCH AUTHORITY: ALL LOVE, ALL MERCY

Paul wrote to the Corinthians with “many tears” (2 Cor. 2:4), and after sending off the letter he passed days of anxiety. How he rejoiced when Titus came back with news of the deep repentance of the Corinthian believers (2 Cor. 7:11, 12)!

After he received this good news, he sat down and wrote a second letter, expressing his joy. As he wrote, he thought of the man who had received the rebuke, and added: “The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him” “in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes” (2 Cor. 2:6-8, 11).

This is how the church must use its authority. It is a process that begins with love and ends with mercy. From beginning to end, its purpose is redemptive.

To practice discipline in harmony with these principles is not easy, but it can be a blessing for the church and those who may be in need of help. 🍀

¹ To “disfellowship” is to withdraw a person’s membership from the church, to dismiss an individual from church membership for cause.

² Bible quotations are from the New International Version. Correctly understanding this statement is a major concern of this article

³ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2016), p. 65.

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REASON?

PRAYER?

Some believe they are mutually exclusive.



I noticed the wry of my smile after it happened. It wasn't for anyone: I was alone. It came of its own as I read Margaret Downey's public-alert e-mail announcement on the Mayday for Humanity event to be sponsored May 6, 2021, by the National Day of Reason.

CELEBRATING REASON

Most striking to me was Downey's line that read, "The Freethought Society is proud to be a cosponsor of an event that celebrates the National Day of Reason in sharp contrast to the National Day of Prayer." It's the sharpness of that blade of contrast that I feel obligated to find, even if it slices my searching hand. On the day of reason-instead-of-prayer, participants will hold a three-hour fundraiser in support of shelters for the homeless and food distribution centers. Safe Harbor, a nonprofit organization in Chester County, Pennsylvania, that has worked for the needy through 25 years, is set to be the principal beneficiary of the nontheist exercise that will include "a free online entertainment extravaganza featuring celebrities, comedians, musicians, poets, and an auction." Downey explains that nontheists must take action on behalf of the needy "because prayers simply don't work to solve human problems."

PRINCIPLE OR OBLIGATION?

Downey has a point, of course, about the limits of reverential behavior. The Bible, also pointedly, has laid down the principle, in James's rhetorical query: if someone "is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?" (James 2:15, 16). And verse 18: "Someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works."

Early Christian church leader James was here echoing his Master and younger sibling Jesus, Christianity's Founder. Jesus takes no responsibility for Downey's misunderstanding or mine as to Christian obligation toward the needy. One story of His that bears repeating here uses the same stark categorization that Downey reaches for in her announcement, only that instead of theist and nontheist, instead of reason in sharp contrast to prayer, He talks about simple sheep in

contrast with smart and sprightly goats (Matt. 25:31-46). The sheep's oblivion stands in sharp contrast to the goats' self-consciousness. Affirmed for their goodness in caring for His needs, the sheep can manage only, in effect, "When did we ever do that stuff for You, Lord?" (see verses 37-39). The goats are entirely more confident: "There has never been a time, Lord, when we failed to do our duty toward You" (see verse 44).

The goats' insight—contrast the sheep's stark lack of it—is more than anything else a function of their commitment to visible, material, scientifically controllable evaluation. Much like Downey's dismissal of the efficacy of prayer. For prayer—audible as it may be—is decidedly less in-your-face than our society's problems of injustice, income inequality, homelessness, etc. Another thing is that lots of prayer literally takes place behind closed doors as per guidance from the One in whose name Christians pray (Matt. 6:6).

But moving right along, here are two thoughts:

PRAYER STILL MATTERS

First, Christianity's Founder was Himself both homeless and servant of us all (Matt. 8:20; Luke 9:58; Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45), which in no way diminished His prayer life (Luke 6:12). For His schedule of living, being homeless, serving the needy, and praying fervently all fit very well together.

And a second thought, which requires me to tell a very sad story. It's the kind of story that Downey would likely cite to demonstrate that "prayers simply don't work to solve human problems."

The evening after I read Downey's nontheist announcement it was my lot to attend one of the most heartrending goodbye services I ever have. It was Friday evening, at the beginning hours of a time of surrender to serenity and repose, when I'd normally be sending greetings and best wishes to people rescued for a season of a single day from the tyranny of labor by the sacred institution of Sabbath rest. This time around, though, everyone attending across the country, Zoomed together into a single room at the center of America, was losing a bitter struggle. It was a struggle to reconcile effervescent video clips with oblivion, with the silence of death. None of us could reconcile cruel and current truth with the scenes of youthful and familial delight, of joy and success in living, that passed across the screen. None of us knew

how to stomach the unpalatable fact that the loved and talented young woman reveling with her family, accomplishing more than her years might indicate, pushing the boundaries of maximum in those pictures, was gone. Gone. We'd have to live the rest of life without her. How would we? How would Dad and Mom and kid sister do that?

I describe confounding tragedy when I say that at barely 40, this couple have buried three of their four children. The moment, the hour, the occasion, felt utterly incompatible with any concept of rest or stability, or anything remotely related to my and our customary "Happy Sabbath!" greetings.

During the program one grieving uncle listed the individuals and groups he could recall who had prayed for the saving of the life now lost. Downey may even appreciate the way he summarized at the end of his lengthy list of pray-ers. He said, "If there was one case that could have been solved by prayer, this was it." Was he referencing evidence that prayer doesn't work to solve human problems?

One note of mine to the grieving father included a question, variously stated, but requiring no answer: "So, should I dare say, does it make anything but mockery of sense to say today, to a grieving father, 'Happy Sabbath!?' Is being bereaved, heartbroken, and weeping proof that there's nothing to celebrate this time around? Is exposure of my violated soul, or the demonstration of human limitations, the basis for repudiating such language or sentiment? What would God do on a Sabbath like this?"

THE SOLUTION

What did He do? It turns out that Christianity's Founder always had Downey's specific concerns in mind in setting aside an entire day for prayer and other acts of worship. He has already and often enough seen the gamut of problems humans encounter, problems that run much further than hunger and homelessness. His program addresses them and much more: service to the marginalized, society's overlooked, and underserved; ultimate liberation from poverty, broken hearts, blindness, captivity, and oppression of every sort, inclusive of the otherwise-unbreakable tyranny of death (see Luke 4:16-21; 1 Cor. 15:20-22).

Many of His closest colleagues, the ones who loved Him most, lived that Sabbath as the ultimate gloomy day, the day of ultimate gloom. Like the nontheists,

His friends and followers did not yet understand better. But He was showing that when we get to our worst, rest is a better response than panic.

Then, very early in the morning on the day after, following His participatory and exemplary rest on behalf of us all, He blew up hell, blasted it to smithereens or to oblivion or to whatever other state of ultimate and irreversible elimination may be conceived or declared. By the gaping door of His assigned hellhole He demonstrated what He once announced at another death-door: "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). Death and hell and hunger are children of the evil one. Because of Christ their days are numbered. Christianity's Founder feeds the hungry, frees the dead, and everything good for life before that, beyond that, and in between. As He Himself announced when He came two millennia ago: "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Once again, just like Downey, sharp contrast. But unlike Downey, the contrast is not between reason and prayer. It is between the self-seeker and the Servant, between the incarnation of integrity and the thief, between the fraudulent exploiter and the one who gives all there is to give so that we might have all there is to have—life in the fullness of its abundance. God so much loved that He gave His Son so that all of us, theist and nontheist, might be won by that love to experience real life—not an interlude between eternities spent in doubt; not an interception of nonentity measured in decades; not the brief, bleak season of Macbeth's sentiment, "a walking shadow" circumscribed by the ends of mortality. What God's love gives is not life punctuated by loss. No. It is life. Life is now life because death is no more, and there are no more tears; life is now life because "the former things have passed away" and nobody hurts anymore (Rev. 21:4).

Christ, the Lord and Founder and Incarnation of Christianity, is the Source beyond all society's need; He is the Resurrection and the Life that counts in forever joy. He would welcome Downey into His program, and show her how to accomplish so much vastly more than nobly helping a 25-year-old Pennsylvania nonprofit. And His program works right well with prayer. 🍀

Lael Caesar is an associate editor of the *Adventist Review*.

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ALESSANDRO RIGOBELLO

THE DAY I TOLD GOD HE WAS NOT ENOUGH

Searching the city, she found more than enough.

The week had been stressful already. I had said goodbye to my husband in Ohio, who was staying behind to sell our house, moved to New York City by myself, met two new bosses for the first time, searched for an apartment, all while trying to navigate the subways and buses of the Bronx and mid-Manhattan.

It was my first Sabbath in the city. I so wanted the companionship of fellow believers. I got up early, warmed leftover pizza in my hot pot, and got ready to go. The Days Inn where the firm was housing me for two weeks had a phonebook. I checked the listing for the Church of the

Advent Hope, with which I had been in contact before I moved to the city. I wrote down the address and, with my slim knowledge of the layout of Manhattan, ventured forth to conquer the commute.

After a few conversations with the hotel's front desk staff, passersby, and each bus driver that came to the bus stop, I finally boarded one headed in what I hoped was the right direction. I settled in, happily enjoying my first Sabbath on my own in New York. I missed my husband terribly. This was a massive adventure. I stepped off the bus at the closest stop, tried to orient myself, and began walking. After all, it couldn't be too far away. I was certain of the address, even though I had left the scrap of paper behind. I am famous in my family for my lack of direction sense, and Manhattan's layout felt either backwards or sideways to me—I wasn't sure which.

Tromping along in my dress shoes on cold, cleared sidewalks on that cloudy day, I found 86th Street and headed right, searching for the address that I was certain was a couple of blocks off Park Avenue. I walked one way, then back the same direction I had come. Even though the buildings pretty much butted up right to the sidewalk, I could not locate the church. I took my search one block over, and then another.

After a futile 45 minutes of searching, and now far from my Sabbath peace, chilly and worn out, and feet freezing, I was no longer certain that I could even navigate the bus system well enough to get myself back to the

hotel. I used some of my precious expense fund, which had to last me until I moved to the apartment, and hailed a taxi. If I hadn't been so upset, the novelty of hailing my own cab on the street might have perked up my spirits, but as it was, I slumped into the back seat. I did not care if my seat belt was fastened or whether the driver saw my tears, now running down my cold cheeks. I was so upset, I'm not sure I even tipped the driver.

Back at Days Inn finally (now almost 11:30), I felt so defeated that I gave in to a flood of self-pity, exhaustion, and disappointed tears. I slid out of my clothes and lay facedown on the bed, sopping the pillow. Once I had finished with the drama, I went to wash my face, wishing I did not have to spend all Sabbath alone in my hotel room. Tears still threatening, I stood in the small bathroom and tried to calm myself, feeling again the bitter sting of disappointment. Quietly, gently, but very distinctly I heard His voice. God asked, "Am I not enough for you?"

The tender love with which the question caressed my mind brought a fresh spate of sobbing, but I finally managed to say: "Not today, Lord, not today."

I sensed God's understanding, His precious supporting presence, but I wanted to be with people. I could read and study and write letters, of course, but Sabbath is a day for fellowship, and I needed the support of fellow believers on that first Sabbath in the city.

Determined to try again, I got dressed again and rechecked the listing in the phonebook against the slip of paper I had left behind. I rolled my eyes in frustration when I saw it. I had been a full six blocks off in my memory of the street number. Armed with the written address, once again I hopped on a bus, hoping that I would make it while the church was still open. I found it without much trouble this time and ventured in. To my pleased surprise, someone greeted me at the door and handed me a bulletin.

"Am I too late for the worship service?" I asked.

"You might catch some of it." The host smiled and held the sanctuary door for me.

I slipped in and sat in the back row so as not to disturb anyone. No more than five minutes later the benediction was said, and people stood, gathering their belongings. I sat, uncertain what to do. Should I go downstairs to the luncheon that had

I sensed God's understanding, His precious supporting presence, but I wanted to be with people.

been announced? I didn't feel I hardly had any right to it, but I had a distinct aversion to eating more leftover pizza in my hotel room. So I joined the group moving downstairs. As I was about to join the back of the line, I found myself being taken to the front of the line by a smiling, dark-haired young woman. She insisted that visitors never waited at the back.

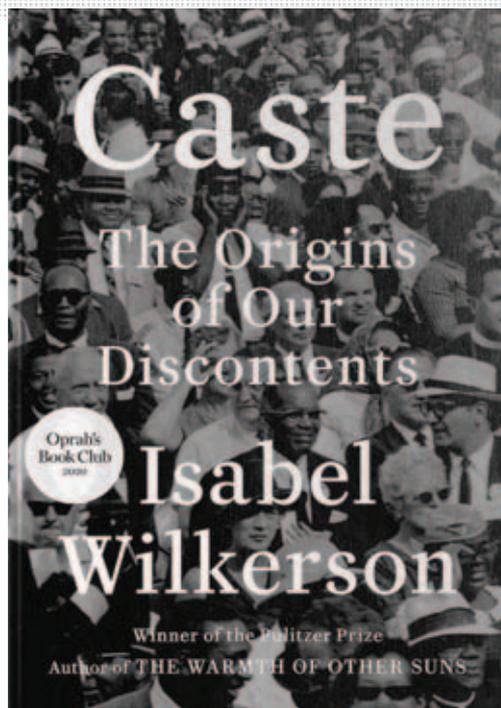
"I didn't think I even deserved to stay and eat, I got here so late," I said. Introducing myself and the story of my morning, I began to feel better immediately. She took me under her wing, chattering away as if we had known each other forever. The food was simple but delicious, and I found myself being introduced to a number of people, all of whom were friendly and welcoming.

I continued to stay, content to take in the afternoon's activities. Then, much to my joy, I was invited to join a small group that was going down to lower Manhattan to listen to a concert that evening by the King's Heralds. We stuffed ourselves into several cars and headed out, arriving in plenty of time for the concert. The young woman, Audrey, and I had about 30 minutes to chat, and enjoyed getting acquainted. She had a way about her that was so pleasant, as if she didn't know a stranger. She made it so easy for me to feel at ease myself, and I felt as though I had found my first friend in the city. The concert was enjoyable, and I felt so much thankfulness in my heart that God had understood my need for fellowship and had made certain I had a full day of it.

Dropping to my knees beside my hotel bed that night, I was again crying tears, but they were tears of joy and thanksgiving for a God who understood, for a God who knew my need, for a God who arranged the perfect afternoon for His imperfect child. ♣

Ann Slaughter is a recently retired paralegal from Warren, Ohio, who enjoys writing and editing.

CLOSER LOOK



How We See Ourselves, and What We Think

Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents, Isabel Wilkerson, Random House, New York, 2020, xvii + 477 pages, hardcover, US\$19.02. Reviewed by Lael Caesar.

Isabel Wilkerson is well remembered for her exhaustively researched 2010 volume, *The Warmth of Other Suns*, which traced Black Americans' mass migration from South to North through several decades of the twentieth century. Her new book goes back much further—400 years—to the origins of our discontents, the book's subtitle. Its 31 chapters are divided into seven sections that examine and comment on everything from the bases for establishing human divisions, to their antiquity, the strength and breadth of the reach of those divisions, their lethality, and the difficulty of escaping from them, whether as individuals or as a people or nation. Her comparison between the

world's oldest democracy, the United States of America, and the world's largest, India, is not path breaking. Wilkerson shows that long before her day, American academics from Northern schools have been willing to risk their lives by embedding themselves in the South's day-to-day living in order to grasp as fully as possible, and document as accurately as possible, the strength of caste—rather than race—as a thoroughgoing feature of the Jim Crow South.

The author's interesting explanations of the origin and development of such terms as "race," "caste," and "Caucasian" may help if they could be more widely known. Of the skull whose study gave the name "Caucasian" to a particular race, it has been said that "never has a single head done more harm to science" (pp. 64-67). "Race is a recent phenomenon in human history" (p. 64), dating to the start of the transatlantic slave trade. Geneticists and anthropologists, underwritten by the mapping of the human genome—and random families' access to their DNA kits today—still labor to educate the world about the total lack of scientific basis for "race." Yet it remains, for too much of the world, particularly the English world in America, an immovable and moral dogma. Race, the anti-phenomenon, hews closely to caste because of the enduring classification it imposes in the United States. And caste is readily distinguishable from class: the latter may shift; the former is fixed—like the cast on your broken arm, or the cast of characters in the play you love to watch. As athlete and entrepreneur extraordinaire LeBron James says, you may prosper wildly, you may attract worship, but "if you are an African-American man or African-American woman, you will always be that" (p. 108).

The idea of caste in America is not distinctly academic either. Before it was outlawed, the Indian classification

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system named four castes, from first-class Brahmin through Kshatriya and Vaishya to fourth-class Shudra, along with multiple subdivisions—jatis—within castes. Categories specified both location and function in society. Below the four castes thronged the untouchables—who preferred to call themselves Dalits—so despised that even contact with their shadow was held to be defiling.

Their relation to what America identifies as its racial segregation came awkwardly home to American civil rights icon Martin Luther King, Jr., during his first trip to India. Upon visiting a high school in the state of Kerala at the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent, King was peeved and enlightened by the introduction the school's principal gave him. At the time, King had already led the Montgomery bus boycott sparked by the arrest of Rosa Parks. He had come to India at the invitation of the nation's prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. He had dined with Prime Minister Nehru. He was famous. So he was stunned and unhappy to hear the principal introduce him to the students as "a fellow untouchable from the United States of America" (p. 22). He could not see the connection between such a personage as himself and the label "untouchable" applied to the lowest of India's population. Offended at first, King came to agree that the attribution of "American untouchable" was appropriate.

Wilkerson's scholarship gives attention to the role of the Bible in validating slavery. Interpreters of Scripture invoked both the curse of Ham (pp. 102, 103; and see Gen. 9) and the text of Leviticus 25:44 ("Both thy bondmen and thy bondmaids . . . shall be of the heathen" [KJV]), in determining the way African slaves were categorized. And the 61 pages of the book's third part, not numbered as part of any chapter, serve the distinct purpose of explicating the eight "pillars of caste," pillars that mostly expose a strong religious grounding.

Examples of their names and bases include "divine will"—what God has ordained; "heredity"—the providence or fate of your birth; "endogamy"—the group beyond which God forbids you to marry; and "purity"—the responsibility of maintaining the integrity of your race/caste. Either confidence or ambivalence about the divine sanction itself was

For students of Scripture and followers of Jesus Christ, such books as Wilkerson's are both rebuke and warning.

seen in the fact that society determined separate Bibles to be used for swearing oaths on: one for Whites and one for Blacks (p. 117). Other pillars make explicit the human capacity for cruelty, if only in the name of orderly and lawful living: "occupational hierarchy" dictates cooperative servility to an overlord; "dehumanization" enables masters' torture of their no longer human objects; "terror as enforcement" is self-explanatory. Pillar 8, "inherent superiority," in which the member of the lowest caste "must be held subject, like other domestic animals" (p. 160), may well be seen as pillar 1.

For students of Scripture and followers of Jesus Christ, such books as Wilkerson's are both rebuke and warning. In the Hindu creation story the four castes issue, in descending order, from the mouth, arms, thighs, and feet of Manu. The *Dalits* are under his feet. Mesopotamians had a creation story in which the gods create humans to work so they themselves may rest. In the Bible story male and female are formed by the hands of the Lord God, to reflect their Creator's image and likeness. This is noble truth.

That followers of God and students of the Scriptures could use the Bible for affirming the exploitation of fellow humans instead is its own tragic rebuke, an ineradicable stain on the history of Christianity. For despite slavers' interpretations, the Bible's teaching is that humanity is a single family and a part of God's family, reflecting and basking in the spirit of His nature of love. The warning is that self-serving biblical interpretations, demeaning to any part of humanity, are demeaning and degrading to all of humanity.

Wilkerson speaks compelling and disturbing truth. Her voice deserves every reader's ear. ▀

SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Testimony on the origins of life on earth is diverse and contradictory. As with Jesus in Matthew's report from Caesarea Philippi, some say one thing, others another, and yet others yet another (see Matt. 16:14). Consider, below, the range of opinion. Consider it all, in context of authority, divine authority. What do humans say? What does God say?

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. . . . And it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.
MOSES, Genesis 1:1-31, NIV.

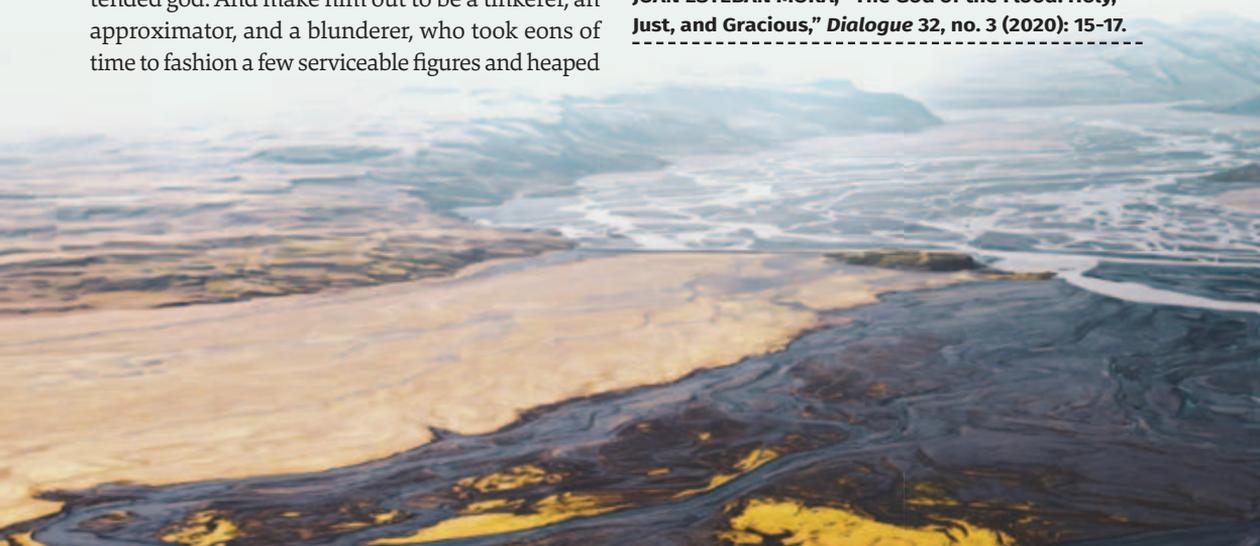
The creation week shows the divine act of progression from the first to the sixth day, punctuated by a satisfaction at the creative accomplishment of each day and a divine appraisal that the creative outcome was “good.”
CLAUDE RICHLI, “And It Was Very Good,” *Dialogue* 32, no. 3 (2020): 9-11.

Those who have yielded, not without a struggle, to the overwhelming evidence of evolution are now trying to award themselves a medal for their own acceptance of defeat. The very magnificence and variety of the process, they now wish to say, argues for a directing and originating mind. In this way they choose to make a fumbling fool of their pretended god. And make him out to be a tinkerer, an approximator, and a blunderer, who took eons of time to fashion a few serviceable figures and heaped

up a junkyard of scrap and failure meanwhile. Have they no more respect for the deity than that?
CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2009), p. 85.

Belief in the creation of the world by God is clearly expressed at all key stages in biblical tradition—Genesis, the prophets, the Psalms, the Wisdom literature; even the deuterocanonical second book of Maccabees.
JOSE MORALES, *Creation Theology* (Portland, Oregon, and Dublin, Ireland: Four Courts, 2001), p. 12.

Whether in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic or any other emergency or even at the very end of time, we can face uncertainty with the assurance that the God who is a powerful judge is also merciful and caring and has bound Himself into a covenant relationship so that we might be saved.
JUAN ESTEBAN MORA, “The God of the Flood: Holy, Just, and Gracious,” *Dialogue* 32, no. 3 (2020): 15-17.





I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that I hope there's no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that.

My guess is that this cosmic authority problem is not a rare condition and that it is responsible for much of the scientism and reductionism of our time. One of the tendencies it supports is the ludicrous overuse of evolutionary biology to explain everything about life, including everything about the human mind.

THOMAS NAGEL, *The Last Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 130, 131.

The claim (*of evolution, specifically that death existed prior to Adam*) impacts upon the literal and historical trustworthiness of the Bible in general. One can, for example, trust neither the historicity of the fall of Adam nor the actuality of a universal "wet flood" if the literal biblical statements about

these events are countered by the statement that death existed prior to Adam.

JOHN T. BALDWIN, "Progressive Creationism and Biblical Revelation: Some Theological Implications," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 3, no. 1 (1992): 111, 112.

Insight is absolutely unique. . . . [P]hysical causes can't do what insight does in a systematic way. Sound waves are unlike water waves in their physical substance, but the fact that they're both waves means they show strikingly parallel behavior in many respects. Parallels for insight, on the other hand, are nonexistent.

DOUGLAS AXE, *Undeniable: How Biology Confirms Our Intuition That Life Is Designed* (HarperOne, 2016), p. 100.

In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them

GOD, Exodus 20:11, NIV.

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. . . . For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.

GOD, Psalm 33:6-9.

THE HOLINESS OF HELPING

In hindsight, there was no lesson to learn; just a reminder of a problematic query.

That day I was ready to spend time in a volunteer community where the task was to make someone else's day a little brighter by delivering a hot meal and their requested food bank boxed "pantry items." Once a month volunteers assemble at the food bank to deliver these items. These volunteers are amazing people, with big hearts and loud laughter. On that day, I was not ready for the literal tense shift that occurred.

SOMETIMES IT IS BETTER NOT TO ASK QUESTIONS THAT OFFER SURFACE LEVEL CONTENT BUT HAVE DEEP-LEVEL ANSWERS.

A new member joined the volunteers: Stan. He was participating in the event to fulfill a college course requirement. "I pushed this assignment back till the very last minute, because it's not something I would *want to do*," he said. The introduction of Stan's purpose was presented as casually as you'd pick up your keys when they fall to the ground: minimal thought. However, excessive effort was required of him. There were 30 homes to visit. As we split into smaller groups, my group had an extra member: Stan.

Throughout the day, deliveries went smoothly. Stan proved to be a helpful team member, but remained quiet between stops. Maybe this experience would instill a desire to do this again? After our last delivery we headed back to the county food bank. The driver, my friend Mike, asked the questions we all wanted to hear: "How was the experience, Stan? Will we see you again?"

Stan shook his head, stared out the window: "Nope. I will donate money, but I won't show up for *this*. I remember when

people like you came to our apartment and brought my mom food for us. It's humiliating. I always wondered if people showed up because it was their job, or if they were just doing it to feel like a good person, or maybe a church made them do it."

Sometimes it is better not to ask questions that offer surface-level content but have deep-level answers. Stan's words gained emotional traction, and the silence that followed was almost welcomed.

I wondered: Is mission and ministry weighed differently if I donate my time versus money? At a young age, Stan was engaged in exploring the motive behind kindness. "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves" (Phil. 2:3, NIV). Wise counsel. The actions of the day, Stan's story, and Scripture did not feel reconciled in my heart. *Am I serving others with the right intentions and actions? How does my interaction with those I serve honor their value as children of God?*

Apparently I was not alone in pondering this problematic query. Mike called and simply asked: "Why *do* we do it?" Not a surface-content question; and the answer is rooted in the Bible, in a specific request by Jesus to *everyone*. It speaks to heavenly hospitality. It is a question, a statement we will hear again: "... as you did it to one of the least of these ..." (Matt. 25:40). Still, there are physical and monetary challenges to how we can each help others.

What I perceived as a problematic query is an opportunity to engage in action: it's not "why" but "how": *How will I serve others with the right intentions and actions?* Just like that, our actions shed light on the holiness of helping. ▀

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