

ADVENTIST REVIEW

**JANUARY 2016: NEW EVIDENCE LEAVES MACROEVOLUTION
DANGLING + WHO ARE WE, AND WHY ARE WE HERE?
+ CREATIVITY AND HEALTH + RIDING IN THE KEY
OF LIFE + IDENTIFYING THE EARTH DESTROYERS**



CHRISTIANS AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

**CREATION CARE
OR CRYING WOLF?**

She just told us what she's thinking. **Will you?**



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**ADVENTIST
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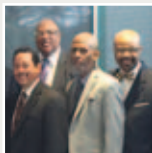
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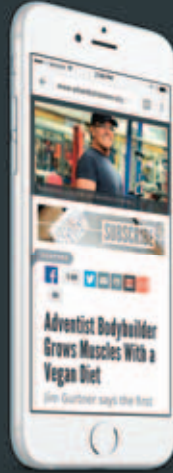
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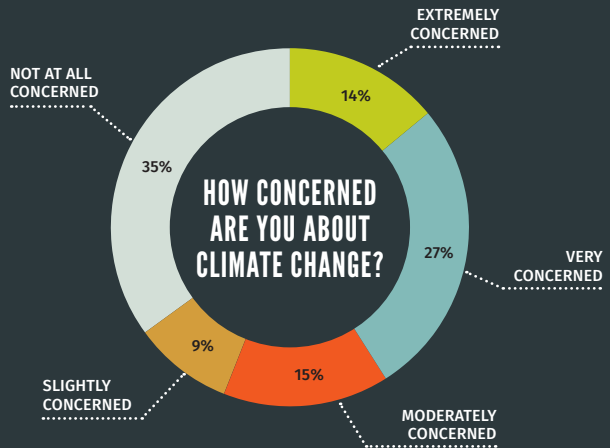
THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:



- 1 Adventist Woman Injured in California Shooting Speaks of Jesus' Return
- 2 Adventist Bodybuilder Grows Muscles with a Vegan Diet
- 3 Adventists in Puerto Rico offer seven reasons to keep the Sabbath
- 4 First Adventist Church opens in northernmost corner of Siberia
- 5 If we can't accept refugees, how can heaven accept us?

ARE YOU GREEN?

During the first weeks of December we surveyed *Adventist Review* reader's opinions via FB and Twitter on the causes and realities of climate change. As you can see from the response to one of the questions below, our readers range all across the "green" spectrum.



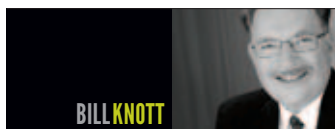
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YOU'VE GOT STORIES. WE TELL STORIES.

I look forward to hearing from you.
Email me at jared@adventistreview.org

ADVENTIST
REVIEW



"Going green" will require that we do more than recycle our aluminum and keep noxious chemicals out of landfills.

The Green Repentance

*"Generations have trod, have trod,
have trod;
And all is seared with trade;
bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and
shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel,
being shod.
And for all this, nature is never
spent;
There lives the dearest freshness
deep down things."¹*

When the English religious poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote those candid but hopeful lines more than 125 years ago, he couldn't have guessed how much in danger nature now is of being "spent"—exhausted and depleted by the assault of industrialization and population explosion. Hopkins wrote that "the world is charged with the grandeur of God." Faith meant believing God would protect what He once made.

It's much harder for Christians to be optimistic now about the planet's future, and much more difficult to decide what to do about it. One human activity alone, deforestation, in one region only—the Amazon rain forest—cleared more than 15,000 acres of biodiversity every day during the first years of this millennium, the vast majority of it for cattle to satisfy the world's appetite for beef, or to grow soybeans. It's tempting for "green" Christians to "call out" Brazil's farmers and cattle ranch-

ers for despoiling one of the world's great ecosystems, on which the planet's air and water quality depend. We need the billions of trees they are cutting, we say, and thus they shouldn't fell them.

But history reminds us that an equally dramatic assault on the landscape occurred in the United States during the first half century of Adventism—long before environmental concern arose among Christians. Case Western University law professor Jonathan Adler reports that, according to U.S. Forest Service data, "farmers were clearing forests at the amazing clip of 8,640 acres per day, a rate that continued for over 50 years." The now-open farmland of New York, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois was an unbroken canopy of dense, virgin forest when the Pilgrims landed, on which, Adler notes, "it has been said that . . . a squirrel could travel from Maine to the Mississippi River without ever touching the ground."³ Much of this land was and still is used to graze cattle and raise soybeans.

And yet how differently Americans, Adventists among them, relate to this story of deforestation. This is the stuff of patriotism and hero legends, of tough determined immigrants who wrestled a living out of the land with sweat and hand tools to build a farm economy that one day fed the world. This clearing of the land was necessary, we

say, to build the most prosperous nation ever known.

Jesus once asked, "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?" (Matt. 7:3). It's a question Adventist Christians should consider as they educate themselves about the complex issues of both caring for the earth and caring for the physical and spiritual needs of 7 billion fellow humans.

"Going green" will require that we do more than recycle our aluminum and keep noxious chemicals out of landfills. It will require thoughtful Adventist Christians to address the far more vexing and enduring questions of how to feed, house, and clothe the millions in the developing world who still wrestle with the land to stay alive. The best minds of this movement are needed to design sustainable irrigation projects, increase crop yields, and improve food distribution services—all in Jesus' name.

God may not float the axhead that allows us to cut more timber this time around (2 Kings 6). The Spirit may well task us to more wisely use other, newer tools to extend meaningful Adventist witness.

¹ Gerard Manley Hopkins, "God's Grandeur."

² Jonathan H. Adler, "Poplar Front," Policy Review, Spring 1993.

Bill Knott

I have been surprised and lately shocked because of the increasingly strident pro-gun tone of many of the postings by Adventists on Facebook and in other communications.

IRMA ROSADO TURNER, REDWOOD VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

I enjoyed Christelle Agboka's article "My List" (November 2015) on the importance of remembering, or counting, our blessings. The point was similar to one of my favorite quotes from Ellen White: "Nothing tends more to promote the health of body and soul than does a spirit of gratitude and praise" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 251).

Doug Abbott,
Union City, California



LETTER TO ALEXANDER

Regarding Clifford Goldstein's "Letter to Alexander" (November 2015), I can only assume that Goldstein wrote tongue-in-cheek, but I suspect he may get a lot of flack because of the suggestion in the last paragraph that Sunday worship is the future of God's church rather than the seventh-day Sabbath. This is not new, of course; I have read a similar message in a letter from Ignatius to the churches of his day, about the same period as Goldstein

seems to be addressing in his article. May God preserve us from repeating the mistakes of the past.

Kathleen King
Queensland, Australia

I need an explanation regarding "Letter to Alexander" by Clifford Goldstein. Does the last paragraph really say that keeping the Sabbath is not important? Please give me an answer. I am very troubled.

Anna Jo Clithero
Via e-mail

Editor's note: We recognize that Cliff's Edge can be edgy. In his "Letter to Alexander," Goldstein used the arguments of some second-century A.D. Christian authors, based on their current cultural trends, that helped move the Christian church from Sabbath to Sunday worship. Far from advocating a move away from Sabbath, he was seeking to show how Christians today are still in danger of allowing culture to change their faith.

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

[Responding to "A Prisoner of Conscience," November 2015.] In 1953 my father, Manuel Rosado, was a Seventh-day Adventist minister at the Spanish church in San Fernando Valley, California. After he passed away I discovered two letters among his documents. They were written around Veteran's Day 62 years ago, when [some] Adventists were still conscientious objectors. This belief on the part of Seventh-day Adventists was still in effect well into my 20s and 30s. Although I am no longer an Adventist, I have been surprised and lately shocked because of the increasingly strident pro-gun

As an avid reader of the *Review* for over 60 years, I have seen many changes, and I am definitely enjoying the new format.

LUANA HARLAN, NAMPA, IDAHO

tone of many of the postings by Adventists on Facebook and in other communications.

I offer these letters as a glimpse back to some of the beliefs with which I was raised. I remember my dad talking about a young church member who was distraught because he was being asked to carry a weapon. Most Adventists at that time served in the Armed Forces as medics or worked in other nondirect combat positions.

Irma Rosado Turner

Redwood Valley, California

WATCHING THE CHANGES

As an avid reader of the *Review* for over 60 years, I have seen many changes, and I am definitely enjoying the new format.

The section on sleep in the October 2015 issue was most

informative. Wes Youngberg's article certainly makes one realize the importance of adequate sleep. Bill Knott's perspective in regards to loss of sleep to maintain our devotional life gives one something to contemplate.

Many thanks for an excellent magazine.

Luana Harlan

Nampa, Idaho

GREAT STORY

Loved it! Please print more articles like Larre Kostenko's "Witness is a Chain" (October 2015).

Bill Krick

Fresno, California

TRIBUTE TO HEROISM

I found the article written by Stephen Chavez, "Serving Christ and Caesar" (November 2015), a fitting tribute to the heroism of

Desmond Doss, and to the dedication of those young Adventists who were part of Operation Whitecoat.

Two corrections need to be made in this article: At the conclusion of the article the following quote appears, "You have no idea what a horrible sight a field of battle is . . ." Chavez attributes this statement to "U.S. Civil War general Robert E. Lee." Robert E. Lee was indeed a general but not for the United States. He fought for the Confederate States of America. The second correction is that Desmond T. Doss [technically] received the Medal of Honor, not the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Noel H. Shanko

Orlando, Florida

OFFICIAL NOTICE MEETING OF THE MEMBERS ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

Please take notice that a quinquennial meeting of the members of the Andrews University Corporation (commonly known as a "constituency meeting") will take place on Tuesday, March 1, 2016, beginning at 3:00 p.m., in the Garber Auditorium of Chan Shun Hall on the campus of Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. At the meeting, the members will receive reports from Andrews University administration, elect a portion of the Andrews University Board of Trustees, and consider minor amendments to the bylaws.

*Theresa C. Popp
Secretary of the Corporation*

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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- » [MASSACHUSETTS CHURCH MOURNS TRAGIC DEATH OF 4 FAMILY MEMBERS IN FIRE](#)
- » [ADVENTIST BODYBUILDER GROWS MUSCLES WITH A VEGAN DIET](#)

NEWS



People hold candles during a vigil after the shooting spree in San Bernardino, California on December 7, 2015. REUTERS/PATRICK T. FALLON

ADVENTIST INJURED IN CALIFORNIA SHOOTING SPEAKS OF JESUS

AMANDA GASPARD OVERSAW EVENT WHERE MASSACRE OCCURRED.

BY ANDREW MC CHESNEY

A Seventh-day Adventist who miraculously escaped a mass shooting in southern California with nonlife-threatening head, arm, and leg injuries says she hopes the tragedy will somehow alert people that Jesus is coming soon.

Amanda Gaspard, 31, an environmental health specialist, was over-

seeing a holiday gathering organized by the San Bernardino County Public Health Department at a social services center in San Bernardino, California, when two assailants went on a shooting rampage on December 2, killing at least 14 people and injuring 21.

“She was in charge of the meet-

ing that day. In God’s mercy, she had just dismissed everyone for a short break, or there would have been more people in the room,” said her mother, Diane Gaspard.

The mass shooting was the deadliest in the United States since 26 children and teachers were killed in a Connecticut grade school in



STUDENTS HELP MIGRANTS

A group of 10 people traveled by minibus from Britain's Newbold College of Higher Education to a migrant camp in Dunkirk, France, as Adventist volunteers expanded efforts to make a difference in

Europe's migrant crisis.

Seven students and three faculty members distributed food, sleeping bags, clothing, and other donated goods to some of the camp's 2,000 migrants.



Amanda Gaspard

2012. The assailants, a husband and wife, were shot dead by police in a van several miles from the scene of the attack.

Diane Gaspard said the male attacker could have killed her daughter, a 2002 graduate of Adventist Church-owned Blue Mountain Academy near Reading, Pennsylvania, but for some reason aimed his gun at her leg.

"Amanda's faith is so strong. She witnesses constantly," Diane Gaspard said. "We believe that because of her loving-kindness the shooter did not kill her. He stood over her and shot her. He could easily have aimed at her head, but shot her in the leg instead."

Amanda quickly contacted her mother to let her know that she was alive. Amanda was hit multiple times with shrapnel in multiple locations, including the head.

"She was so worried about us that she asked a coworker to call us," her mother said. "That poor woman was in shock herself, but managed to tell us that Amanda had been shot. Later she told me that Amanda held her hand and prayed with her."

Amanda was taken to surgery for wounds to her saphenous vein, a major superficial vein of the leg and thigh and the longest vein in the human body. Her mother said Amanda was more concerned for

her coworkers than for herself.

"When we talked to her, she said, 'Mama, pray that this incident can be used to witness for the Lord that He is coming soon,'" she said.

Five of the 17 people injured in the attack were hospitalized at the Adventist-owned Loma Linda University Medical Center, a level-one trauma center that trains for this kind of mass casualty crisis.

Daniel R. Jackson, president of the Adventist Church's North American Division, said church members across the continent were "heart-broken that we must once again mourn the loss of innocent lives as the result of gun violence.



People respond to an altar call by Alejandro Bullón at the Southern Asian church in Silver Spring, Maryland. VISITOR

“Along with our heartfelt prayers, it is time that something is done to address the pandemic of gun violence,” he said in a statement. “It is time that we say no to these tragic massacres that have become commonplace in the United States. It is time that we do something to find solutions to put an end to this pervasive problem.”

Like Amanda Gaspard, Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the Adventist world church, also saw a foreshadowing of Jesus’ return in the tragedy.

“**HE STOOD OVER HER AND SHOT HER. HE COULD EASILY HAVE AIMED AT HER HEAD, BUT SHOT HER IN THE LEG INSTEAD.**”

“Let us pray for those affected by this tragedy in southern California and plead for the Holy Spirit to use each of us wherever we are in this troubled world to be part of God’s ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18), pointing people to the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, our Savior, who came at the first advent to provide us with eternal life and will return soon at His second advent to accomplish that task,” Wilson said on his Facebook page. 📌

626 BAPTIZED IN U.S. EVANGELISM SERIES

EVANGELIST ALEJANDRO BULLÓN LEADS COLUMBIA UNION CONFERENCE MEETINGS.

BY MICHELLE BERNARD AND SAMANTHA YOUNG, COLUMBIA UNION VISITOR

A major evangelistic campaign across six eastern U.S. states in the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Columbia Union Conference has resulted in 626 baptisms.

International evangelist Alejandro Bullón headlined a 10-day, 16-stop evangelistic series called “Caravana de la Esperanza 2015: Jesús, La Gran Esperanza” (“Caravan of Hope: Jesus the Great Hope”), the culmination of months of small-group Bible studies and countless hours of prayer at more than 100 churches.

Bullón, accompanied by singer Sarah Capeles, invited attendees at each meeting to give their lives to Christ through baptism.

Rubén Ramos, organizer of “Caravan of Hope,” said congregations were overjoyed with the 626 baptisms in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, a territory where the Adventist Church has 144,200 members and has struggled to share the Adventist message of Jesus’ soon return in an increasingly secularized society.

“It has been overwhelming to experience the joy of congregations celebrating the fruits of their dedicated, loving efforts to reach their family, friends, and coworkers for Christ,” said Ramos, vice president for multicultural ministries at the Columbia Union. “To bring a dear friend to Christ is the greatest joy that disciples of Christ can experience in this life.”

Preparations for the evangelistic series took months, and church members will now engage in months of follow-up efforts with new members.

Ramos hopes to keep the momentum going next year by encouraging every department in every local church to find a way to meet the needs of its community. He said he also wants to see every church member praying for five friends and have 1,000 lay evangelists “prepared, tooled, and energized to hold weeks of evangelism in small groups and churches.”

“Imagine what the Lord could do,” he said. 📌

**CLOSE SHAVE AT LLU**

Richard Hart, president of Loma Linda University Health, shaved his beard for the first time in 15 years as part of a \$12,000 fund-raising initiative with the San Bernardino Police Department to fight cancer.



Adventist world church president Ted N.C. Wilson meets leaders of the church's nine U.S. regional conferences. ANN

REGIONAL CONFERENCE PRESIDENTS HOLD KEY TALKS

LEADERS EXPLORE WAYS TO STEP UP EVANGELISM AND OUTREACH.

BY ADVENTIST REVIEW/ANN STAFF

Regional conference presidents and other leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are studying how they might use health centers, vegetarian restaurants, community services, and other outreach methods to expand efforts to share Jesus with urban centers and inner-city residents after holding key talks with General Conference and North American Division leaders.

Adventist world church president Ted N. C. Wilson and North American Division president Daniel R. Jackson held key consultations with leaders of the church's nine U.S. regional conferences, which were established in the mid-1940s to accomplish a stronger work for African Americans and to provide leadership opportunities that would benefit the work of God.

"We discussed various items, including evangelism and outreach activities," Wilson said. "Of special

interest was the subject of Mission to the Cities, and how regional conferences could help to extend that important evangelistic initiative for the large cities of the United States."

Mission to the Cities is an initiative of the General Conference, the administrative body of the Adventist world church, to reach people in the large cities of the world through plans outlined in the Bible and the writings of church co-founder Ellen G. White. Those plans for working in the cities include the establishment of "centers of influence," such as churches, health centers, vegetarian restaurants, book and publishing outreach centers, community services, media centers, day-care centers, and other ways of touching the lives of people. In addition, the plans envisage small "outpost centers" just outside the cities that contain homes for some city workers, lifestyle

health centers, and training schools for those wishing to do evangelistic work in the cities.

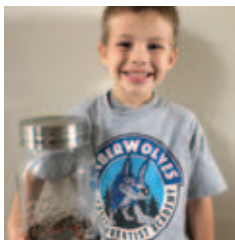
Historically, regional conferences have done much to evangelize large cities and are active in evangelism and reaching out to inner-city residents through community service.

"They maintain a very viable potential for reaching thousands in the huge metropolitan areas," Wilson said. "Their contribution to the ongoing proclamation of the three angels' messages in large cities and in rural areas has been a strong evangelistic outreach of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America and around the world."

In addition to Wilson and Jackson, the special meeting was attended by North American Division executive secretary Alex Bryant and treasurer Tom Evans, and regional leaders William Cox, Dana Edmond, Henry Fordham, Daniel Honore, R. Clifford Jones, Alphonso McCarthy, Hubert Morel, Maurice Valentine, and William Winston. Bobby Mitchell and Calvin Watkins were unable to attend.

Wilson appealed to Adventists worldwide to pray for church members and their outreach in regional conference territories.

"Please pray for our church members in regional conferences whether they are in the large cities or in rural areas as they reach out to thousands upon thousands with the life-saving Advent message of Christ and His righteousness in anticipation of His soon coming," he said. ▀



CHILD LEADS THEM

Five-year-old Brody Webb donated his piggy bank to a fund-raising drive at Skagit Adventist Academy in the U.S. state of Washington, inspiring an outpouring of matching donations that topped \$4,800.

Brody, a preschooler, said he wanted to help his future school.

The response to his generosity stunned his mother, Vonnijo Webb. "I'm a very proud mama, and he's pretty excited too!" she said.

NEWS BRIEFS

1



A GROUP OF PATHFINDERS spruced up the Christian compound where a Seventh-day Adventist congregation meets in the United Arab Emirates, burnishing a growing reputation for helping others in the Middle East. Thirteen Pathfinders and their leaders picked up trash, cleaned open areas, and painted the outer wall of the Anglican church, where Adventists hold their regular services in the Emirate of Sharjah.

2



THE SPANISH SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH in Malden, Massachusetts, lost four members of one family, immigrants from the Dominican Republic, in a horrific house fire on December 4. The cause of the fire was not immediately known.

3



THE ADVENTIST CHURCH broke ground in Cuba by providing free health checks and selling religious books and music discs at the country's largest annual trade fair, the International Agriculture and Cattle Fair, in the capital, Havana. The Adventist Church was able to sell music discs and books because of recent changes to Cuba's economic policy that allows the church to have its own license to sell them.

4



MARANATHA VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL has started construction on a large high school campus in Angola, the first of several schools planned for the African country. The school in Huambo, the second-largest city in Angola (after the capital, Luanda), with a population of 665,000, will have 12 classrooms, an auditorium, and a capacity for 1,000 students.

5



ADRA HAS MOBILIZED efforts to help meet the needs of more than a quarter million people in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais who were without drinking water after two dams operated by a private mining company failed on November 10, causing a massive toxic mudslide of sediment to go into the Rio Doce.

6



JAMAICA'S BRAETON Seventh-day Adventist Church has started taking basic medical and dental services to the doorsteps of people in the community with the Caribbean country's first Adventist mobile clinic. The church, which has offered a back-to-school clinic to more than 600 people a year since 2003, hopes to reach many more people with the mobile clinic, a 20-foot (six-meter) container on a flatbed truck with its own electrical generating and water system.

7



AS WORLD LEADERS MET at the Group of 20 summit in Turkey, a senior Seventh-day Adventist Church official told religious leaders at a related gathering that religious freedom was essential to tackling poverty. Ganoune Diop, director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty at the Adventist world church, delivered a plenary address on the final day of the G20 Interfaith Summit held late November in Istanbul.



Academy staff and students clean up a stretch of roadway once filled with trash.

MENA

ACADEMY PICKS UP CAIRO'S TRASH

NILE UNION ACADEMY STUNS EGYPTIANS BY CLEANING UP 240 TONS OF GARBAGE.

BY CHANMIN CHUNG, COMMUNICATION COORDINATOR, MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA UNION

It is not unusual to see children romping in towering mounds of garbage on the dust-blown roads outside Nile Union Academy in Cairo, Egypt.

In some areas, the trash rises to a height of eight feet (2.5 meters) and burns day and night with a toxic smoke, choking the neighborhood.

But the scene has started changing over the past four months as students and faculty members of the Seventh-day Adventist school implemented an ambitious plan for waste disposal, recycling, and environmental education in the community.

The results have stunned local residents and government officials, and other schools and municipalities in Egypt are now looking to the academy as a model for their own new programs.

"The No. 1 public health problem in Egypt today is sanitation," said

Ronylson Freitas, an Adventist and environmental management expert from Brazil who was brought in by local church leaders to tackle the garbage problem. "From the very beginning, I believed that the responsible disposal of waste would improve the daily lives of people."

The garbage had grown to become not only an issue of physical well-being but also mental health, with people showing signs of depression from living amid the waste, church leaders said. But the local government lacked the financial and human resources to address the mounting problem.

People living near the academy saw the well-cared-for campus and began to plead with school leaders to find a way to resolve the garbage problem.

THINK GREEN

At the request of the Adventist Church's Egypt-Sudan Field, Freitas

first visited Nile Union Academy to assess the situation in 2014. He initially planned to visit Egypt every six months to engage in short, 30-day projects, but then he changed his plan.

"It seemed impossible to work on this issue only every six months," he said. "Changing the mindset and culture requires time to build relationships, teach, and working together daily."

After extensive discussions with the Egypt-Sudan Field, Freitas and his wife, Brunna Freitas, decided to move to Egypt and establish an organization called Think Green.

"We saw not only the visible trash project but also a huge invisible opportunity to build bridges with the community, its leaders, and government officials," said Kleyton Feitosa, president of the Egypt-Sudan Field.

Academy students and staff embraced Freitas' vision quickly and formed a Think Green team.

“Local community leaders and members started recognizing the dedication of the team.”

The view outside wall of Nile Union Academy before and after the garbage cleanup. MENA



The first challenge was to clean up an area that ran 260 feet (80 meters) along the academy's north wall. This was where piles of garbage rose to eight feet in height and emitted toxic smoke around the clock. The academy's team charged into the task, picking away at the heaps every day for 10 days until they had cleared 240 tons of garbage. At the academy's request, municipal trucks came regularly to cart away the collected trash.

Although neighbors had sought the academy's help, they watched the efforts with skepticism at first, said Ron Clark, executive secretary of the Egypt-Sudan Field.

“But when the community saw the continuing commitment of Mr. Rony” as Ronylson Freitas is known — “to be out there with his team collecting the garbage for municipal trucks, local community leaders and members started recognizing the dedication of the team,” Clark said.

Many people living in the neigh-

borhood have stopped tossing trash in the street, waiting instead for the trucks to arrive before bringing out their waste, he said.

Freitas spoke with delight about the joy of passing cars and pedestrians in seeing the cleanup workers make a difference. Some described the changes as a miracle.

“Cars pass by honking to demonstrate their joy and gratitude,” he said. “Some stop and people get out and see the cleanup work closer. Passersby shout their greetings.”

A MODEL FOR EGYPT

Local leaders are talking about finding funding to continue the cleanup. Freitas proposed that a playground for local children be built on the cleared land and a government official has approved US\$32,000 toward the project.

Other schools and municipalities are looking to follow the example of the academy. Local public schools have asked Freitas to teach

their students about waste management and recycling. They are impressed with a water heating system that Freitas built on the academy campus using recycled plastic water bottles and natural resources for generating thermal energy.

The Think Green team is now planning to build a meeting place, the Think Green Recycling Center, to raise environmental awareness through seminars and craft workshops with recyclable materials for the local community.

“Community leaders told me that our school is more respected now than ever before because of Mr. Rony's humility and his efforts with the Think Green project,” Clark said.

That's just what principal Richard Doss has been praying for.

“We want the academy to be known in the community as the place that environmental restoration began,” Doss said. “This project has opened new opportunities for us to be involved in the community.”



When my son works on a puzzle, I am reminded that as human beings we are wired to make sense of our surroundings.

PARIS, SAN BERNARDINO, AND MY ADVENTIST DEFENSE MECHANISM

IT'S EASY TO POINT TO BIBLICAL PROPHECY IN TRAGEDIES, BUT JESUS HAS ANOTHER ANSWER.

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, PASTOR, TRANSLATOR, AND AUTHOR, FROM OTTAWA, ONTARIO, CANADA

I couldn't help myself. I had just finished preaching the opening message of a weekend revival series as a guest speaker at a church west of Toronto, Canada. Taking young Samuel as an example, I had spoken about the need of leaving every worldly distraction aside to listen to God's voice.

But that Friday evening, as I walked into the lobby of the hotel where I was staying, several big television screens made it clear that separating myself from the world, even during the Sabbath hours, would be easier said than done.

A terror attack was unfolding in Paris that would ultimately kill 130 people.

As I hurried up to the elevator and silently prayed for the victims, a startling thought crossed my

mind. What if a Seventh-day Adventist brother or sister was among the people caught in the wrong place at the wrong time?

It was highly unlikely, but we are getting used to finding church members listed among those affected by tragedies. An Adventist woman, Sarena Dawn Moore, was among the nine people slain during a shooting rampage at a college in the U.S. state of Oregon on October 1. Another Adventist, Amanda Gaspard, was injured in the mass shooting that killed 14 in San Bernardino, California, on December 2. The mere thought of an Adventist in Paris made me restless.

By the time I got to my room, however, my "Seventh-day Adventist defense mechanism" had started to kick in. Simply put, it is a process that usually starts with our overarching explanations.

OVERARCHING EXPLANATIONS

Every time I see my 7-year old son bury himself for hours in assembling a 500-piece jigsaw puzzle, I am reminded that human beings are wired to make sense of their surroundings. God created us to like patterns, sequences, and predictable developments. No matter whether you are a cloistered philosopher, a lab scientist, or a baseball shortstop, you feel compelled to find an “underlying frame” that makes reality easier to manage.

In this sense, Seventh-day Adventists sometimes like to think we are one step ahead of everyone else. In a world mired in conflicting worldviews, we believe the great controversy is still an unsurpassed way of coming to terms with our pristine past, our tortuous present, and our glorious future.

We know we are in the gloomy interim between the Garden of Eden and the Eternal Eden. While others scramble to make sense of the senseless, Jesus’ assertion that “an enemy has done this” (Matt. 13:28)¹ is still an unbeaten way of coping with disease, disappointment, or disarray.

Floods? Starvation? Disease? Executions? No worries, Bible prophecies are being fulfilled all around us. Soon Jesus will come and make “all things new” (Rev. 21:4, 5).

Accepting this framework brings a huge relief! We know where we come from. We know what we are doing on this earth. And we know where we are going.

At the same time, we often fall for the “causality trap”: We assign or absolve blame according to our personal scale of values. The dynamic tension between punishment and reward puts our minds at ease. We believe “the angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them” (Ps. 34:7). Thus, according to this faulty logic, when deliverance is

absent, a lack of the fear of God may be surely present.

This eagerness for putting all the puzzle pieces together is neither new nor striking. Jesus Himself was approached by people trying to come to terms with current events. And the answers He provided were quite startling.

PERSONAL TREPIDATIONS

On one occasion people told Jesus of a specific act of violence “with secret satisfaction,” as Ellen G. White wrote in *Christ’s Object Lessons*.²

The reporter Luke put it this way: “There were present at that sea-

of heaven-given discernment, Jesus turned a worldview discussion on theodicy and human merits into a personalized enterprise. The clue, Jesus says, is not establishing worthiness or assigning blame in order to understand, but using the evil we see as a clarion call to examine our own lives.

In the first case, we might infer the Galileans did something to trigger the violent response, albeit excessive, of the Roman procurator. In the second one, we might conclude it was a “random” accident resulting from living in a world of sin. One way or the other, Jesus moves His hearers away from rational explanations to cause them to reflect on their personal salvation.

Without God and repentance we are bound for eternal death. Death could come as the natural result of our wrong choices, as the “unmerited” consequence of a random act of violence or a weather-related catastrophe, or by “natural causes,” the anticipated ending of living in a world of sin. Ultimately, we know our memory will be blotted out for good unless we personally cling to the One who said, “He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (John 11:25).

While current events certainly anticipate the glorious appearance of our Lord, we should never let the sad state of affairs in our world for personal revival and reformation. God is so eager to save us that He is willing to use any method available to bring us closer to Him.

And yes, when push comes to shove, He may even use the Satan-induced throes of unspeakable evil. ▀

¹ Bible texts in this article are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

² Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900), p. 213.



son some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:1-5).

That’s it. In just one verbal stroke

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ALSO IN THIS SECTION:

- » WHO ARE WE, AND WHY ARE WE HERE?
- » THE COLOR OF CULTURE
- » LET'S CELEBRATE CHOICES

DISCOVER



NEW EVIDENCE LEAVES MACROEVOLUTION DANGLING

As scientists who accept the literal intent of the Genesis account of origins, we have faced many challenges to our faith during our undergraduate and graduate education, and later on as professional scientists. Sometimes these challenges left us shaken, puzzled, or otherwise uncertain about what to do with some particular piece of information. Often we were driven back to our knees and to God's Word for reassurance that we were moving in the right direction. Always we were directed to analyze more carefully the data from which the challenge had been derived.

One of the major challenges has been the question of macroevolution. The theory of macroevolution asserts that the



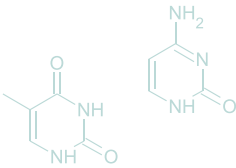
BY ARTHUR CHADWICK AND LEONARD BRAND



first living cells, and all types of life, are the result of nondirected, naturalistic processes without the intervention of an outside agency (God). This theory became dominant in the nineteenth century, when scientists knew nothing about the complexity of living cells. It might have been easy to believe a cell could have arisen spontaneously when it was viewed as little more than a fluid-filled sac.

ENTER DNA

As we learned more of cellular complexity, including DNA, in the twentieth century, naturalistic scientists had no choice but to believe that this amazing system of molecules that undergirds all life originated by accident. What other theory was there? Certainly they could not accept the idea of a Creator, since their naturalistic assumptions prohibited this possibility. Now in the twenty-first century, three crucial discoveries have undermined the foundation on which the evolutionary origin of life forms seemed to be resting.



DISCOVERY 1: The Human Genome Project

The Two Percent. In 1990 the Human Genome Project began as a massively funded effort by a large contingent of scientists to determine the entire information sequence of human DNA. Scientists discovered, much to their perplexity, that only a tiny fraction (about 2 percent, about 20,000 genes) of human DNA coded for proteins (contained instructions for making a specific protein), yet it was known that nearly 100,000 different proteins were made in human cells. That discrepancy demanded an explanation, and the explanation was stunning. It turned out that those portions of DNA that coded for an amino acid sequence in a protein (exons) could be combined in various ways to make different proteins. This explained how only 2 percent of our DNA could make so many proteins.

It became evident that there would have to be another level of control to determine which exons to stitch together, in which order to make the appropriate protein. Then there would have to be

The consortium announced that at least 80 percent, and probably a lot more of the human DNA that had been thought of as “junk,” was functional DNA.

an additional level of control to regulate that, and so on. This multilevel DNA management system was completely beyond anything that had previously been visualized for the complexity of the genetic system.

The Ninety-eight Percent. What was the other 98 percent of the DNA doing? Evolutionary biologists had long ago decided the DNA that was not coding directly for proteins must be “Junk DNA.” This nonfunctional DNA, they declared, was being modified by random mutations to produce new genes that, when functional, would become part of the organism’s genome. By this process, over time, an amphibian could become a reptile, a reptile could become a mammal, and a mammal could become a human. In fact, “Junk DNA” quickly became a strong argument for evolution among biologists.

But trouble was on the way. A new massive, federally funded initiative, called the ENCODE project, was launched to find out what the 98 percent of the DNA that was not coding for proteins was doing. In September 2012 the project simultaneously published a series of papers on the results of their work.¹ The consortium announced that at least 80 percent, and probably a lot more of the human DNA that had been thought of as “junk,” was functional DNA. It is not only functional, but also critically important.

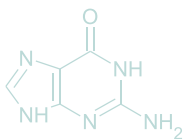
Much of this 98 percent of the DNA that did not code directly for proteins was regulating the protein production system; it was part of the multifunctional control of the genetic system. Evolutionists were quick to condemn the report, in spite of the fact that more than 400 of the top molecular biologists in the world had been working on the project. But the results have held up scientifically and are now widely accepted.

The protein-coding genes, 2 percent of the DNA,² are very similar in all animals. We share 70

percent of our protein coding genes (70 percent of 2 percent) with an acorn worm, 92 percent with a mouse, and up to 96 percent with a chimpanzee. The rest of the DNA (98 percent), clearly, is what makes a human different from an acorn worm, a mouse, or a chimpanzee. This was a huge blow to the theory of evolution, but was long ago predicted by creationists, who recognized that a designer was not likely to burden the cell with junk.

Imagine you go into a well-organized machine shop and observe how it functions. It has hundreds or thousands of drawers along the walls. In each drawer are tools or parts necessary for construction of anything that a machine shop can make. One drawer might have a particular size of drill bit; other drawers may contain specific sizes of machine bolts or washers or nuts. Each drawer has something unique but essential for the construction of a product. Not all products will require the use of all drawers.

These drawers represent the protein coding genes. They are important, even essential, but they cannot produce a thing without the machinist and the blueprint. When the machinist is given a blueprint, he gathers the necessary parts, turns on the needed machines, and, with the skill borne of experience and years, creates the required product. Without the machinist and the blueprint, the machine shop could not produce anything, ever. The machinist and the blueprint represent the regulatory DNA that makes up the majority of the genome. Evolution has no evidence to explain how that genetic system originated. But that's just the beginning of problems for naturalistic explanations; there is more.



DISCOVERY 2: Epigenetics

Until a few years ago, biology dogma was that genes controlled everything, and that it was genes that determine who one is and what one could become. Now that has changed. For generations students of science have been indoctrinated to believe inheritance from outside of DNA (also known as Lamarckism) would be an



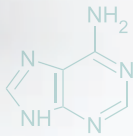
absurdity: an example would be a giraffe acquiring a long neck because its ancestors kept reaching for higher leaves in the trees. However, beginning about two decades ago, scientists began to recognize another level of control that turned portions of DNA on or off, without changing the information in the DNA.

These epigenetic modifications, from outside of DNA, affected an animal's anatomy, function, and even behavior.³ In 2014, scientists studying behavior in mice were able to show convincingly that when a mouse learned an aversion to a specific pleasant odor (animals were shocked when the odor was presented), this aversion could be passed on through three or four generations of offspring. The title of the editorial comments in the scientific journal *Nature* voices the thought that will occur to any Bible reader: "Epigenetics: The Sins of the Fathers."⁴

In the example of the mice and in other epigenetic effects the hereditary outcome is not the result of any mutations or other change in the DNA. The epigenetic chemical changes are passed to future offspring as long as they are needed, and the changes may be reversed in future generations. For example, a parent's diet, behavior, or stress level during pregnancy can affect their offspring

without any DNA mutations, and these changes can be passed on to subsequent generations.

Epigenetics presents a dramatic challenge to evolution. Evolution requires all new genetic information to arise by random changes. Without a Creator, the genetic process cannot know in advance what the animal will need. But epigenetics allows the environment to induce changes that will be beneficial, without the help of natural selection. What kinds of control mechanisms and design are involved in developing a system so sophisticated that it can pass on behavioral information that persists, without a change in genes? This is a serious difficulty for evolutionary theory as it has been taught for 100 years. But there were more challenges to come for evolution.



DISCOVERY 3: Orphan Genes

Orphan gene” was coined to designate protein-coding regions (that is, genes) in an animal that were not found in any related animal type, or maybe not in any other species. In other words, there were no similar “ancestral genes” the orphan gene could have evolved from. It is just there, doing a task unique to that animal, like allowing a honeybee to make honey.⁵ It looks like the animal was designed with that gene because that specific animal needs it. Orphan genes are pervasive in all life forms and pose a critical, perhaps even fatal, obstacle to those seeking to explain the origin of life forms by the evolutionary process.

With continued research the total number of orphan genes identified and recognized has continued to increase, and at present may be as high as 10 to 30 percent of all known genes. More than 1,000 orphan genes are recognized in humans. At least some of these orphan genes are very important; one of them is responsible for the large brain in humans.⁶

An explanation consistent with the evidence is that the genes were part of the original creation, and their existence in the individual taxa is because of original design. Perhaps some of these orphan genes could be genes that became acti-

vated because of altered environmental conditions on the earth after the entrance of sin (epigenetics). In any case, they represent a sobering challenge to the theory of naturalistic evolution.

A BETTER EXPLANATION

Evolutionary theory claims that new and different types of organisms, such as fish, reptiles, and mammals, originated without a Creator. This theory is now facing serious challenges because of the sophisticated mechanisms of molecular biology that have been unveiled during the past half century. Evolution theory remains alive because it is on artificial “life support,” in the form of philosophical commitment to naturalism, with its *assumption* that life did not have a Creator. Three recent discoveries, epigenetics, the ENCODE project results, and orphan genes, have further undercut the intellectual feasibility of “life support” for macroevolutionary theory. For many individuals, naturalism and macroevolution are still the only acceptable explanation for life, but this commitment is based increasingly on philosophy, not on adequate evidence. We hope to convince the adherents of evolution that there is a better and viable alternative that not only has explanatory value in science, but holds the promise of eternal life to those who accept it.

¹ ENCODE. Thirty papers published at the same time in scientific journals, including eight articles and reports in *Nature* 489 (Sept. 6, 2013): 45-113. See also N. Carey, *Junk DNA: A Journey Through the Dark Matter of the Genome* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

² J. Cohen, “Relative Differences: The Myth of 1%,” *Science* 316 (June 29, 2007): 1836.

³ B. G. Dias and K. J. Ressler, “Parental Olfactory Experience Influences Behavior and Neural Structure in Subsequent Generations,” *Nature Neuroscience* 17 (2014): 89-96. Cf. D. Noble, “Physiology Is Rocking the Foundations of Evolutionary Biology,” *Experimental Physiology* 98 (2014): 1235-1243. Doi: 10.1113/expphysiol.2012.071134.

⁴ V. Hughes, “Epigenetics: The Sins of the Fathers,” *Nature* 507 (Mar. 6, 2014): 22-24.

⁵ B. R. Herb, F. Wolschin, K. D. Hansen, M. J. Aryee, B. Langmead, R. Irizarry, G. V. Amdam, and A. P. Feinberg, “Reversible Switching Between Epigenetic States in Honeybee Behavioral Subcastes,” *Nature Neuroscience* 15, no. 10 (2012): 1371-1373. Cf. W. C. Jasper, T. A. Linksvayer, J. Atallah, D. Friedman, J. C. Chin, and B. R. Johnson, “Large-scale Coding Sequence Change Underlies the Evolution of Postdevelopmental Novelty in Honeybees,” *Molecular Biology and Evolution* 32, no. 2 (2015): 334-346.

⁶ M. Florio, M. Albert, E. Taverna, T. Namba, H. Brandl, E. Lewitus, and W. B. Huttner, “Human-specific Gene ARHGAP11B Promotes Basal Progenitor Amplification and Neocortex Expansion,” *Science* 347, no. 6229 (2015): 1465-1470.

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Who Are We and Why Are We Here?

On March 29, 1994, 39 leading evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics—men such as Pat Robertson and John Cardinal O’Connor—signed a document entitled “Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium.”¹ Christians around the world were astonished; Seventh-day Adventists were confirmed in their understanding of prophecy. They remembered Revelation 13:3, “And all the world marveled

and followed the beast,” and the statement in *The Great Controversy*: “The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power.”²

In 2014 Pope Francis I spoke by video to a conference of charismatic and Pentecostal ministers hosted by television evangelist Kenneth Copeland. The pope told these min-

BY GERHARD PFANDL

isters he longed for the separation between the churches to come to an end. "The miracle of unity," he said, "has begun. . . . He [God] will finish well this miracle." The response of the Pentecostal and charismatic ministers was a resounding "Amen." They prayed for the pope and blessed him. Many Christians around the world rejoiced about this development. Seventh-day Adventists were again confirmed in their faith, because for more than 100 years they had been expecting this move toward Christian unity.

On May 23, 2015, the John 17 Movement, an interdenominational organization of Protestant and Catholic theologians and leaders, held a meeting in Phoenix, Arizona. Pope Francis, again by video, sent them a personal message in which he urged them to heal the wound of separation. Then in September, Pope Francis visited America, speaking to a joint session of Congress and to the United Nations' General Assembly. His visit emphasized the close relationship between the Vatican and America since 1984. In the twentieth century, prior to 1984, the United States did not even have diplomatic relations with the Vatican.

THE REMNANT CHURCH

As Seventh-day Adventists we are privileged to see the fulfillment of some prophecies taking place before our eyes because God Himself has called this church into existence and has given it special insights into end-time events. We must never forget that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not an accident of history. It did not come about by happenstance. It is not just one church among many Christian churches. This church has been prophetically foreseen in Revelation 12:17: "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (KJV).

This description fits only the Seventh-day Adventist Church.³ This may sound arrogant, but Adventists have nothing to boast about. Being called by God to proclaim the three angels' messages of Revelation 14 is a challenging and

humbling experience, and an awesome responsibility. The textual evidence concerning the marks of the remnant church is clear. No other church is committed to keeping all of God's commandments, including the Sabbath commandment; and has the "testimony of Jesus," which, according to Revelation 19:10, is the Spirit of Prophecy or the prophetic gift. We Adventists believe that this gift was manifested in the life and ministry of Ellen G. White.

I am firmly convinced that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is God's last-day church, the remnant church of Revelation 12:17. This does

**Theological pluralism
presents a tremendous challenge
to the unity of the church today.**

not mean that only Seventh-day Adventists will be saved. God has His people in all churches. In Revelation 18:2 the fourth angel proclaims, "Babylon . . . is fallen," and in verse 4 he says, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues" (NKJV).⁴ Yes, many of God's people are still in Babylon. No, doubt there will be many Catholics and Protestants in heaven, including Adventists!

THE CHALLENGE OF SCRIPTURE

God called this church into existence and has given it a special message (Rev. 14) to proclaim to the world, to prepare it for the Second Advent. But in order to proclaim this message, we need to be grounded in the Word of God. We need to study Scripture and accept what it says as it reads, and not explain away its plain meaning. According to Ellen White: "If men would but take the Bible as it reads, . . . a work would be accomplished that would make angels glad and that would bring into the fold of Christ thousands upon thousands who are now wandering in error."⁵

Thus, when Scripture says, "In six days the Lord

made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day” (Ex. 20:11), it means He created the world in six days, not in 6 million years. And when God says, “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination” (Lev. 18:22, NKJV), it means that homosexual practice is a sin, whether it is a loving relationship or not. We need to accept the Bible as it reads, unless there are good reasons not to do so.

THE CHALLENGE OF UNITY

From time to time we need to be reminded that we serve a living God. We know from Scripture that Satan is angry with the remnant church (Rev. 12:17). He has seen to it that worldliness and pluralism have entered the Seventh-day Adventist Church as never before. Theological pluralism presents a tremendous challenge to the unity of the church today. The theological controversies in the church in recent decades have produced

Let's never forget who we are and why God has called this church into existence.

different brands of Adventism. Today we hear of *evangelical* Adventists, *progressive* Adventists, *historic* Adventists, and *mainstream* Adventists.⁶ All of them claim to represent true Adventism.

When I began my ministry in 1971, the theological discussions at that time centered on the sanctuary, the Spirit of Prophecy, perfection, and the nature of Christ, specific teachings of interest to Adventists. Today the theological controversies in our church are much more basic, dealing with fundamental Christian teachings: (1) *The Trinity*: Is Christ really God from eternity? Is the Holy Spirit a person? (2) *Creation*: Did God create the world in seven days or seven eons? (3) *The atonement*: Did Jesus die as our substitute or only as our example? (4) *The Bible*: How much of the Bible is inspired? Is the entire Bible reliable, or is it reliable

only when it talks about salvation?

Some Adventists are no longer convinced that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church of prophecy, that Ellen White was a true prophet, and that our sanctuary teaching is biblical. They are in danger of forgetting *who* we are and *why* God has called this church into existence. And Satan would love nothing more than for this to happen.

THE CHALLENGE OF MISSION

So let's never forget who we are and why God has called this church into existence. He is wonderfully blessing His church. We praise the Lord for the progress the Seventh-day Adventist Church is making worldwide. According to the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research at the General Conference, on any given day more than 3,000 people join the church: a Pentecost every day! Praise the Lord!

Yet we also face significant challenges. There are still about 4 billion people who have never heard the Adventist message. Most of them live in what is called the 10/40 window. At times one could almost despair of ever finishing the task. But God has ways and means we cannot imagine. He will finish His work, “not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 4:6, NKJV). So let's rejoice and be glad, and let's fix “our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith” (Heb. 12:2, NASB).⁷

¹ This is an updated version of a presentation given to the Annual Council in October 2014.

² Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1950), p. 588.

³ See Gerhard Pfandl, *The Gift of Prophecy* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2008), pp. 46, 47.

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⁵ E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 599.

⁶ *Adventists Today*, January/February 1994.

⁷ Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the *New American Standard Bible*, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

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THE COLOR OF CULTURE

Grandpa Sam died in the early 1970s. Grandma Florence remarried seven years later to Benny Beeman, who told great stories. One was about a child being carried on a ship to America to escape European anti-Semitism. At sunrise, after a distress call had come and the ship had veered, they stared at the surface of the ocean, full of debris and bodies: leftovers from the *Titanic*.

But it was another story, not unrelated, that I mimic now. In Poland, Benny was walking along railroad tracks when Gentile lads his age beat up the little Jew boy. It was par for the course in the color of that culture. Two years later, having come with his family to America, Benny Beeman walked into his first day of school in Brooklyn. There, in a seat in the New World, was one of his assailants.

"We became," Benny said, his words distorted by a sob, "best friends for 65 years, until he passed last May."

Had they remained in the old culture, that kid might have grown into someone who would have fed Benny and his family to the Nazis, instead of someone who shared a table with Benny and his family for six decades.

It's scary: the color of our culture bleeds out and taints us. You think that the great-great-grandchildren of antebellum slave owners are so much better people than their slave-owning great-great-grandparents? If not, why are they appalled and disgusted by the practices of their ancestors? Why would they, even the secular versions, never consider doing what their churchgoing, Jesus-loving predecessors did with such fervor that it took a war to stop them? Or, a little closer to home, why 75 years ago were

many churchgoing Southern Christians (Adventists included) such evil racists that they acquiesced in, or even openly supported, practices that today only evil racists would acquiesce in or support? If they weren't evil racists, why did they acquiesce in or support those practices? Again, the answer is culture.

Unless we leave our culture, we can never escape it. And even if we leave, its colors, though fading over time, remain, slanting our interpretations of everything, even the Word of God. Just as we read the Bible in the language of our culture, we interpret it, not just through that language (which carries its own subjective baggage), but through that culture as well. (What, it's just a coincidence that in contemporary Western culture some claim to find scriptural support for "monogamous homosexual relationships"? Hardly.)

Food, language, clothes, everything, is colored by culture. Ideally our faith should help us transcend whatever awful hues our culture carries. But, unfortunately, culture shades faith more than faith colors culture.

Perhaps all we can do is individually recognize how much our minds are soaked through and through by our environment. Then we must surrender our culturally colored selves to the Word of God, which "is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to the dividing of soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

Corporately, forget it. It's an individual choice only, the difference between beating someone up or sharing that person's table. ♣

Clifford Goldstein is editor of the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*.

CLIFF'S
EDGE
CLIFFORD
GOLDSTEIN



FOOD, LANGUAGE,
CLOTHES,
EVERYTHING, IS
COLORED BY
CULTURE.

CELEBRATIONS

LET'S CELEBRATE CHOICES

C
is for choices
—determinates of our destiny.

BY ALLAN R. HANDYSIDES

This is the first of a 12-part series on healthful living based on the program and book CELEBRATIONS, produced by the General Conference Health Ministries Department. CELEBRATIONS is an acronym for 12 healthful lifestyle principles, one of which will be explored each month. To learn more, go to healthministries.com.

Some 100 years ago two team leaders adopted the same goal: they both sought to be the first to lead an expedition to the South Pole.

Once made, the decision presented them with countless choices: selecting the clothing to wear, the food to eat, and, most important, the mode of transport to use.

Roald Amundsen, the Norwegian explorer, gleaned from Inuit methodology the best type of equipment and clothing to use. He chose dogs to pull the sleds. He placed his supplies and food-stuffs strategically along the early part of the proposed route before the main expedition set off, thereby lessening the loads his dogs would have to pull. He carefully considered every detail, and from his informed base he made decisions as to how to proceed.

Robert Falcon Scott, however, a British naval officer, chose to use ponies and “modern” motorized sledges. He was a brave and daring man, but apparently did not pay the same attention to Inuit methodology that Amundsen did. His motorized sleds ceased functioning after a few days, and the poor ponies could not stand the frigid conditions. By the time he and his team reached the Transantarctic Mountains, the ponies were in such poor condition they had to be killed. Scott arrived at the South Pole to find that Amundsen had beaten him to the goal.

The outcome for one team was triumph; for the other, death and disaster. The diaries of Scott’s heroic team chronicled a story of frostbite, starvation, and eventual death on the return journey from the pole.

Decisions by Amundsen and Scott represented choices. Some were made very consciously and intentionally; others were possibly influenced by emotion, personality, culture, or whim. Brave and courageous though Scott and his men were, they suffered the consequences of their choices and

decisions, perhaps made in ignorance, but nevertheless lethal in outcome.¹

CHOICES—THE CRADLE OF DESTINY

Choices often determine our destiny. To a large extent even our health can be determined by the choices we make on how we live, the risks we take, and the balance we seek in life. We each come into the world with an endowment for health that may vary from that of others, but how we care for the gift of our health influences the expression of our genetic capacities.

The intricacies of handmade Asian rugs are remarkable and often represent hundreds of thousands and sometimes even millions of individual choices. For those rugs with 800 hand-tied knots per square inch, the maker has to select a colored thread to create the pattern 800 times. In the overall pattern the subtle variety in the shapes making up the whole speaks to the individuality of each knot.

Our lives are patterned in a similar way. Every day we make countless seemingly insignificant decisions, the sum of which determines the overall fabric of our lives.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, “health reformers” developed a litany of health laws based on scant evidence. Fortunately, today a wealth of evidence can guide us in making choices. Principles of balance and moderation, with the avoidance of harmful substances, will pay dividends in the health of temperate and informed people.

One of the early classic studies on lifestyle and health was published in 1972. Drs. Nedra Belloc and Lester Breslow, from the U. S. Department of Public Health in Berkeley, California, were among the first researchers to present convincing answers on lifestyle habits that promote longevity. In their study of 6,928 adult residents of Alameda County,

California, they found that some lifestyle habits influenced longevity:²

- » adequate sleep (seven to eight hours per night)
- » no eating between meals
- » a nutritious daily breakfast
- » the maintenance of the recommended weight for one’s height, bone structure, and age (BMI, or body mass index)
- » regular physical activity
- » the nonuse of tobacco
- » a reduction in the use of alcoholic beverages (the GC Health Ministries Department and the Seventh-day Adventist Church advocate abstinence)



Roald Amundsen

The outcome for one team was triumph; for the other, death and disaster.

In a nine-year follow-up they showed that the more of these seven habits a person regularly followed, the greater their chance of longevity. Of the group following all seven habits, only 5.5 percent of men and 5.3 percent of women died before the end of the nine-year period, whereas in the group that followed only three of the seven habits, 20 percent of the men and 12.3 percent of the women died.³

A GIFT FROM GOD

Good health is a gift from our Creator-God. The proper “preventive maintenance” reduces risk and leads to a happier, healthier, and longer life.

It’s only by developing and maintaining a close walk with our Lord that we will truly obtain optimal whole health and know the joy of living well, both here

and throughout eternity. ♣

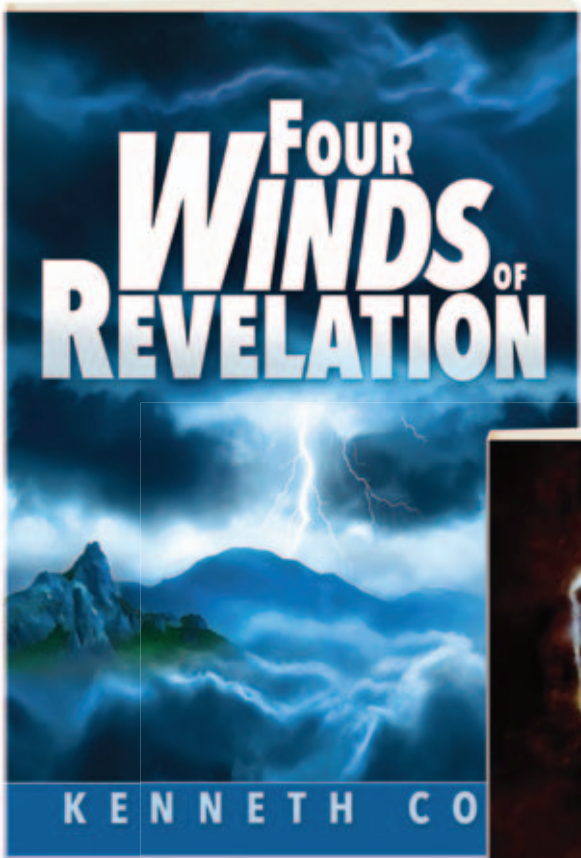
¹ Roland Huntford, *The Last Place on Earth—Scott and Amundsen’s Race to the South Pole* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1999).

² N. B. Belloc and L. Breslow, “Relationship of Physical Health Status and Health Practices,” *Preventive Medicine* 1, no. 3 (August 1972): 409–421.

³ *Ibid.*

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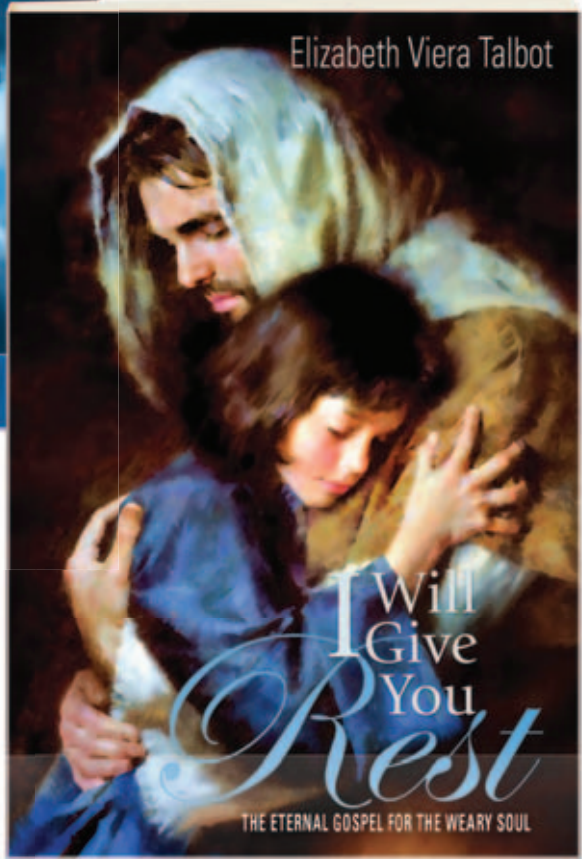
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CONNECT

“Worshipping God through art is about creating something for the Lord and opening yourself up to God’s beauty and holiness.”

Can Creativity Be Good For Your Health? Page 32



CONNECT



CREATIVITY

BY JULIE GUIRGIS

With the influx of popular media encouraging a culture of excessively busy but passive consumers, many of us feel bombarded and disjointed. As scientific evidence continues to mount, it appears that creativity is one of the keys to unlocking well-being and wholeness.

We are all born creative. God hardwired creativity into our DNA. All of us have a divinely inspired impulse to create. The Bible tells us: "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27).

When we create in divinely inspired ways, it pleases God, because He sees us reflecting His image, and He loves to see His image shine throughout the world. Our creativity is expressed in different ways and to varying degrees, even if we aren't born with a genetic bent to a particular talent.

More important than talent is the willingness to explore what interests us. As we nurture our creativity we develop a part of ourselves that is innate, and this gives us the freedom to express our untapped attributes, stimulate our minds, and heighten our sense of well-being.

iors "makes us more resilient, more vividly in the moment, and, at the same time, more connected to the world."¹

RESEARCH FINDINGS

In 2010 the *American Journal of Public Health* published a review entitled "The Connection Between Art, Healing, and Public Health."² Researchers analyzed more than 100 studies about the impact of art on health. The studies included everything from music and writing to dance and the visual arts.

Each study examined more than 30 patients battling chronic illness and cancer. The researchers described the benefits, saying:

"Art filled occupational voids, distracted thoughts of illness."

"Improved well-being by decreasing negative emotions and increasing positive ones."

"Improved medical outcomes, trends toward reduced depression."

"Reductions in stress and anxiety; increases in positive emotions."

"Reductions in distress and negative emotions."

Fostered "improve-

AND HEALTH



COULD THERE BE A CONNECTION?

DEFINING CREATIVITY

Creativity is about expression and trying new things. It involves imagination; originality; and the ability to challenge, question, and explore; take risks; play with ideas; and keep an open mind. The creative process is more important than the product or tangible results. This makes creativity accessible to anyone, because it's central to the journey of discovery rather than the final product. It helps us flourish by teaching us about who we are, what we love, and what we can give to the world.

Ruth Richards, psychology professor at Saybrook University, says engaging in creative behav-

ments in flow and spontaneity, expression of grief, positive identity, and social networks."³

CREATIVE THERAPIES

While therapy and psychotherapy have proven benefits, creative therapies are successful in ways that differ from traditional therapies. Throughout the past decade psychologists have begun looking at how the arts might be used in various ways to heal emotional injuries, develop a capacity for self-reflection, reduce stress, and alter behavior and thinking patterns.

Involvement in creative arts helps people become more communicative. A greater aware-

BENEFITS OF CREATIVITY

The benefits of creativity—physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually—are numerous:

PHYSICAL

Encourages movement and fine and gross motor development

Helps relieve chronic pain

Reduces high blood pressure

MENTAL

Reduces stress and anxiety

Increases ability to focus sharply

Encourages problem solving and exploration of different solutions

Promotes independence of thought

Develops self-control and discipline

EMOTIONAL

Increases positive emotions

Brings something positive out of a loss, bad experience, or depression

Offers greater life satisfaction

Strengthens sense of well-being

Helps bring ideas to life by being imaginative

SOCIAL

Improves relationships by working collaboratively

Expands social community

Develops better communication by writing, talking, listening, or painting

Resolves conflicts

SPIRITUAL

Connects to a wisdom deeper than our own

Enhances self-knowledge

Connects us to God

Fosters and develops a deeper sense of integrity

Creates balance and order

ness of our need for expression brings impetus for change. Creative therapies are used to further the emotional, mental, physical, spiritual, and social integration of a person. This can involve music, art, writing, and other creative activities. It allows individuals to solve conflicts, manage behavior, improve self-esteem, develop self-awareness and insight, and develop interpersonal skills.

Artistic expression and our worship of God can be accomplished through all works of art, including painting, drawing, crafts, sculpting, photography, writing, and drama. Worshipping God through art is about creating something for the Lord and opening yourselves up to God's beauty and holiness.

Creative physical activities benefit the mind and body by releasing endorphins, and act as a healing tool by relieving stress and anxiety. They can also be a form of worship: "Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with timbrel and harp" (Ps. 149:3).

Music is the most accessible medium of art and healing. Ellen White wrote that music is "one of the most effective means of impressing the heart with spiritual truth"⁴ "Rightly employed, [music] is a precious gift of God, designed to uplift the thoughts to high and noble themes, to inspire and elevate the soul."⁵

Expressive writing can improve control over pain, pain severity, and depression. Psychologist James Pennebaker wrote, "There is little doubt that writing has positive cognitive consequences, and self-report studies suggest that writing about

upsetting experiences produces long-term improvements in mood and health."⁶

WAYS TO BE CREATIVE

Creativity, imagination, and innovation usually find us during moments of play. Play is a child's natural medium of self-expression. Crafting or drawing alongside children, who take such joy in the pure act of creating, can inspire us to see creativity as fun and enjoyable. Spending time in nature can also inspire creativity as well as boost mood by reducing the stress hormone cortisol and instilling confidence and peace of mind.

Joining a group of like-minded "creatives" can also nurture the imagination. Interacting with others who share similar artistic passions sparks our own creativity.

Try exposing yourself to new creative stimuli to open your thinking. Take walks in nature, listen to music, and study paintings and photographs. The creative journey brings us closer to our deepest nature. 🌿

¹ In Carlin Flora, "Everyday Creativity," *Psychology Today*, Nov. 1, 2009.

² Heather L. Stuckey and Jeremy Nobel, "The Connection Between Art, Healing, and Public Health: A Review of Current Literature," *American Journal of Public Health* 100, no. 2 (February 2010): 254-263.

³ James Clear, "Make More Art: The Health Benefits of Creativity," jamesclear.com/make-more-art.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1903), p. 168.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁶ James Pennebaker, "Writing About Emotional Experiences as a Therapeutic Process," *Psychological Science* 8, no. 3 (1997): 162-166.

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TALENTS FOR EVERYONE

BY ELLEN G. WHITE

God has not given talents to merely a chosen few, but to everyone He has committed some peculiar gift to be used in His service. Many to whom the Lord has given precious talents have refused to employ them for the advancement of the kingdom of God; nevertheless, they are under obligation to God for their use of His gifts. Everyone, whether serving God or pleasing himself, is a possessor of some trust, whose proper use will bring glory to God and whose perverted use will rob the Giver. . . .

The human family is composed of responsible moral agents, and from the highest and most gifted to the lowest and most obscure, all are invested with the goods of heaven. Time is an entrusted gift of God, and is to be diligently employed in the service of Christ. Influence is a gift of God, and is to be exerted for the forwarding of the highest, noblest purposes. . . . Intellect is an entrusted talent. Sympathy and affection are talents to be sacredly guarded and improved, that we may render service to Him whose purchased possession we are.

All that we are or can be belongs to God. Education, discipline, and skill in every line should be used for Him. The capital is His, and the improvement is the usury that rightfully belongs to the Master. Whether the amount entrusted is large or small, the Lord requires that His householders do their best. It is not the amount entrusted or the improvement made that brings to men the approbation of Heaven, but it is the faithfulness, the loyalty to God, the loving service rendered, that brings the divine benediction, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Verse 23. This reward of joy does not wait until our entrance into the city of God, but the faithful servant has a foretaste of it even in this life.

HOW ARE YOU USING YOUR TALENTS?

"Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two,



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The knowledge of the truth is altogether too precious to be hoarded up, and bound about, and hid in the earth.

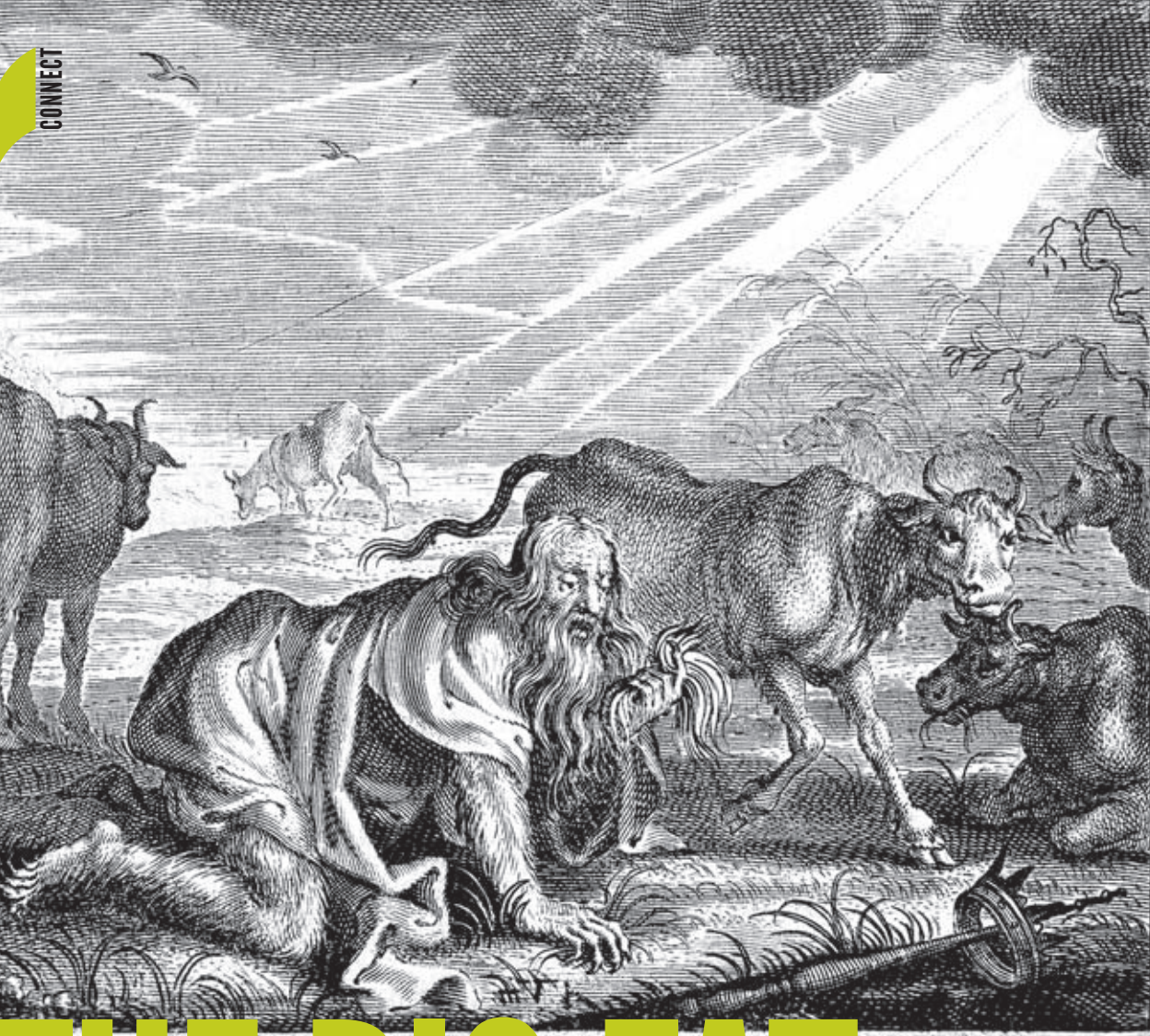
he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his Lord's money." Matthew 25:16-18.

The knowledge of the truth is altogether too precious to be hoarded up, and bound about, and hid in the earth. Even the one talent entrusted by the Master is to be faithfully employed. . . .

God pronounces His blessing upon unselfish, unwearied diligence; and though we may have but one talent, and can make but a small investment, yet God will make the effort fruitful in results. The man who works in faith will realize that his intellect, his affections, his whole power, belongs to God, and he will seek to make diligent use of his powers, and will improve his faculties and talents. . . .

What are you doing with your talents? Are you putting them out to the exchangers?

This is taken from *Our High Calling*, pp. 289, 290. Seventh-day Adventists believe that Ellen G. White (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.



THE BIG FAT BABYLONIAN REPENTANCE

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S WINDING PATH TO GOD

BY PATRICK MAZANI

God had done everything possible to bring His strayed people back to Him. Judah had consistently repelled and ridiculed His messages, and mocked, scoffed at, and tortured His prophets. Prophet Habakkuk could not stand it. The situation was beyond remedy (2 Chron. 36:15-17). He pleaded with God to do something to stop the corruption (Hab. 1:2-4). So God let him know that He had hired bitter, brutal Babylonians to teach His people the necessary lesson (verses 6, 7). Habakkuk couldn't stand that either: Judah was God's people; the Babylonians clearly were not. Habakkuk could not imagine what good God could be after.

GOD'S STRANGE WAYS

God clearly knew who the Babylonians were. He described them as bitter, furious, grabbers, terrible, and fearful; proud and distorted in their view of justice (verse 7). With no cushion for compassion in their emotions, they were the reigning masters of marauding and violence in their time (verse 9). However unfair it seemed to Judah and to Habakkuk, God had simply hand-picked wicked Babylonians to chastise apostate Judah. He would let wicked people deal with other wicked people. God and Habakkuk both knew that Babylon's cruelty to Judah would exceed any bounds of reason or humaneness (verses 14-17).

Theodicy seekers—people concerned about the justice of God—still struggle today over scenarios of apparently unrestrained brutality in our world. What are we supposed to learn from these displays of evil that might build our relationship with God? The Habakkuk scenario evidently involves something beyond Judah's punishment for doing ill: it involves the tyranny of the wicked unleashed in the name of God.

GOD'S APPOINTEE

However astonishing to Habakkuk (or me), God repeatedly ascribes to Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar the title "My servant" (Jer. 25:9; 27:6; 43:10), someone He appointed to destroy Judah. We know little about how God communicated with Nebuchadnezzar. He does show up where God wants him. He does his job well, he is a thorough destroyer (2 Kings 24:10-16; 25:1-21; Jer. 39:10).

Now, answering God's call and doing God's work

is no inconsequential matter. Workers for God need and display many virtues, including commitment, faithfulness, dedication, devotion, and awareness of their appointment. They do not all equally shine, whether in their genius or their faithfulness. What is highly significant is how God ever reaches out to flawed humans, commissioning them to do His work. Perhaps His using Nebuchadnezzar is not as remarkable as might at first appear.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S EXPOSURE

In the course of his duties as God's destroyer Nebuchadnezzar developed an association with Hebrew youths Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Dan. 1:6). His selection of these Judeans began his explicit orientation about the most high God (Dan. 1-4). Without validating Babylonian brutality, the sequence of events shows how God gives opportunities for knowing Him better to those who serve Him. Nebuchadnezzar's interaction with these youth led him to acknowledge the supremacy of their God (Dan. 3:28, 29); it moved him to confess Daniel's God as "God of gods, the Lord of kings" (Dan. 2:47).

In spite of this, no documentation has ever been encountered in recovered Neo-Babylonian records of Nebuchadnezzar mentioning anything about the God of the Hebrews. Recovered inscriptions ascribed to Nebuchadnezzar give no hint of any awareness on his part of the God of Daniel and his friends.

On the contrary, ruins of the ziggurat at Borsippa disclose duplicate clay cylinders with an inscription attesting Nebuchadnezzar as servant to multiple other gods. The inscription is true to the biblical depiction of Nebuchadnezzar's pride and glory of which Daniel severely warned. That pride would ultimately drive him from regal pomp to grazing like cattle until he learned humility before the King of kings (Dan. 4:25). The inscription reads in part: "Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the loyal shepherd, the one permanently selected by Marduk, the exalted ruler, the one loved by Nabû, the wise expert who is attentive to the ways of the gods, the tireless governor, the caretaker of Esagil and Ezida, the foremost heir of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, I, when Marduk, my great lord, duly created me to take care of him, Nabû, the administrator of the totality of heaven and the netherworld, put in my hands the just scepter."¹

Besides this glorification of his significance

and person, several prayers by Nebuchadnezzar to different gods also survive. In one the king prays that Nabû “look joyfully [and] favorably upon my deeds and grant me as a gift a long life, satiety with extreme old age, stability of throne, long duration of reign, defeat of adversaries, [and] conquest of the land of the enemies.”²

According to Scripture it was Yahweh, the Lord and Creator of heaven and earth, not Nabû, beloved by Marduk, who gave Nebuchadnezzar the conquest of Judah (Dan. 1:1, 2), and lordship over the world as he knew it (Jer. 25:9, 15-26). However

Faith in providence still strives with human pride that would ascribe superiority to people simply because they possess power.

much Nebuchadnezzar might attribute his conquests to Shamash and Marduk,³ it was the God of heaven, not idol figments of Mesopotamian imagination, that ruled Nebuchadnezzar’s life and world, as surely as He does today. Political chaos, the horrors of terrorism and the destabilization of nations do not undo the truth that the Most High still rules in human affairs and gives power and authority to whom He wills, without regard to human evaluations of their importance (Dan. 4:17).

Faith in providence still strives with human pride that would ascribe superiority to people simply because they possess power. Rejecting that assumption of superiority and repudiating the stupidity of pride will let us learn from Nebuchadnezzar’s repentance and help to save us from our own fall (Prov. 16:18).

GETTING THE MESSAGE

By commissioning Nebuchadnezzar to discipline disobedient Judah, God facilitated his acquaintance with individuals who taught him about God. As he interrogated the four Hebrews who rose to the top of his elite class he discovered the profit of keeping them closer to him (Dan.

1:19, 20); their consistent witness continued Nebuchadnezzar’s education about true religion and the God of heaven.

One wonders what more astonished the Chaldean monarch: that Daniel could explain the predictive value of his dream, or the fact that Daniel’s God could reveal to him the thoughts of the king (Dan. 2). Then there came the showdown with the three worthies on the plain of Dura (Dan. 3), again humbling the rage of the so-called caretaker of the god Nabû.

Finally, God returned to Nebuchadnezzar’s head with another dream, confounding again his incompetent heathen cohort, and revealing again His power to unravel mystery and resolve enigma (Dan. 4). The revelation did not come without urgent warning that the king turn from arrogance to compassion. God might in turn show him His compassion (verse 27).

But the mighty monarch did not easily yield. Power was too intoxicating and pride too fulfilling. Until the fateful day on which he strode back and forth in his royal palace gloating on his greatness, and a voice halted him (verses 29-31). Disorientation drove him into the forest that would be his home for seven years: he would feed on grass like cattle and be drenched with dew and rain until he came to acknowledge “that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses” (verse 25).

IN HIS HEAD

Somehow, in the mysterious providences of the God who has access to our head, the king got it. God got through: O the depth of His riches of wisdom; how unfathomable are His ways (see Rom. 11:33)! God finally got through. Nebuchadnezzar woke up. And left us these last words: “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works *are* truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down” (Dan. 4:37). 🌿

¹ W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger, eds., *The Context of Scripture: Monumental Inscriptions From the Biblical World* (Boston: Brill, 2003), vol. 2, p. 309.

² *Ibid.*, p. 310.

³ “The widespread peoples whom Marduk, my lord, entrusted to me, whose shepherdship the hero Šamaš gave me, the totality of countries, the whole of all inhabited regions” (David Stephen Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets* [Atlanta: Scholars, 1999], pp. 36, 37).

Patrick Mazani works as a Seventh-day Adventist pastor in Indiana.

SOMEONE TO LEAN ON

It happens to all guest speakers: the introduction. For many, being introduced as a speaker is not the torture it is for me. The moderator speaks about your education, accomplishments, publications, service. *It's mortifying!*

However, today I am introducing a dear friend with whom I have worked abroad for years. We have gone through perilous journeys, all in the name of education and nongovernmental organization work. I met Mike while writing a grant for an orphanage in Italy, where I spent weeks researching, teaching, and watching the orphanage grow.

I remember working with his team and agreeing to help transport children across the border of a war-torn country to their new homes. Social unrest surfaced, and for nine long hours, in a stone-covered manhole, I sat with nine other volunteers, tending to children feet away from the border. It rained, and we heard gunshots and yelling. I remember holding an 8-month-old baby, praying that the child would not cry and disclose our hiding place.

Today Mike is receiving a humanitarian award from his hometown in Texas. I will introduce him. Backstage we speak of projects with his two sons who are now in college and his lovely wife, Emma. Mike: the person who collaborated in grants for clinics and clean water projects abroad. A man of faith, who still knows God travels with us to the farthest regions of the world and says: *I need someone here.*

I have seen and served much in places I never imagined my passport would gain a visa. I smile, remembering Mike and his family in the pouring rain in Chile, singing Michael English's "In Christ Alone" at

the top of our lungs as clean water poured out of the pipes, finding its way into a village that *never* had clean water.

I head to the lectern, look at Mike, and say, "God has been good to us, my friend. Don't ever forget," and render my introduction.

Something is not right.

As I speak, I notice Mike's demeanor change. His humble shoulders perk up. He sits taller. His smile is different. He leans back, proud. *Has he forgotten the grace by which we stand here tonight? No "victories" were accomplished on our own. We had someone to lean on. God had all the grace and mercy we needed.*

As the standing ovation begins, Mike walks to the front. *I don't know you.*

But the applause stops as Mike trips on the edge of a chair and falls facefirst on the carpet. I watch as friends help him up. In moments Mike reaches the lectern to applause. He shakes my hand, shakes his head, and says: "I think for a minute the sound of success made me forget." *You, my friend, I recognize.*

• • •

Two weeks later I receive a package from Mike and Emma: a CD with the song "In Christ Alone" circled. Mike has scribbled a note: "In Christ alone I place my trust and find my glory in the power of the cross. In every victory let it be said of me my source of strength, my source of hope, is Christ alone.* I won't forget again."

That's an introduction worth repeating.

*Michael English, "In Christ Alone" (1992).

Dixil Rodríguez, a university professor and volunteer hospital chaplain, lives in Texas.



IT HAPPENS TO ALL GUEST SPEAKERS: THE INTRODUCTION.



RIDING IN THE KEY OF LIFE

Leave it to a musician to know about balance.

Mark Willey is passionate about music. You'd expect that from someone who graduated from Baltimore's Peabody Conservatory and serves as organist and director of music at Spencerville Seventh-day Adventist Church in suburban Washington, D.C.

But another one of Willey's passions (and he has more than one) is cycling. "I have home movies from when I was 2 years old, riding down our driveway in Loma Linda on a little plastic bicycle," he says. "My two biggest influences would be those two things: music and cycling. My life would be impoverished without both of those."

CALCULATING THE COST

And just as music is mathematically precise—so many beats to a measure, so many notes in a line—Willey's precision led him to a startling realization a few years ago: maybe he and his wife could get by with one car between them, instead of two. "Insurance, gas, repairs, tires, all the rest of it, we figured that by selling my car and

PHOTO BY JIDONG ZHONG

BY STEPHEN CHAVEZ

not replacing it, we could save possibly \$700 a month.” He decided to take up the slack by transitioning from four wheels to two.

Several years before, Willey had started moving toward commuting by bicycle. “I remember thinking, *You know, it would be interesting to see if I could ride to work.*”

And while getting around on a bicycle might sound practical in small towns and medium-sized cities, we’re talking about Washington, D.C., an area that regularly makes the list of cities with the nation’s worst traffic.

First, Willey calculated the distance he would have to travel, about 13 miles each way. Then he started collecting clothing and equipment to make his rides safer, more comfortable, and more convenient. “I purchased a rack and waterproof bags to carry what I need for the day. I even got a trailer for my bicycle that I can put 100 pounds of stuff in, in case I have a lot to carry. I ride pretty much year-round, except for snow. But I’ve ridden into the teens and twenties. I ride at night, with powerful lights on the front and back.” Over time, he discovered routes that were more scenic and bicycle-friendly.

Commuting by bicycle needn’t be expensive. Willey found his bike used on Craigslist for \$400. He suggests finding a bike that fits comfortably; good brakes are essential. He also recommends investing in good clothing, gear suited to the climate that’s both comfortable and visible. If you haven’t been on a bike in a while, make sure you’re comfortable on a bike. Go to a parking lot or a residential area where there’s not much traffic, and practice turning, stopping, and avoiding obstacles. “Then just go out and ride; experience it. It’s one of the best parts of my life,” he says.

REAPING THE BENEFITS

Willey finds cycling rewarding on every level: physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Contrary to what most people might think—that cycling 5,000 miles a year would take more out of you than it gives—his experience is just the opposite. “When I ride, the choir’s asking me, ‘You must’ve ridden,’ because they know. The energy I bring to the experience makes a world of difference.”

For Willey, riding a bicycle is a multisensory experience. “Riding snaps you out of lazy thinking,” he says. “I generate my best ideas on the bicycle.” In addition to the plants and animals one

For Willey, riding a bicycle is a multisensory experience.

would miss speeding along in a car are the aromas and temperature changes for which most people riding in cars would be unaware.

A commute that takes 25 minutes one way in a car takes only 50 minutes on a bike. “The way I look at it,” he says, “for basically an extra 50 minutes a day, I get an hour and a half of exercise. My workday is more productive, and I sleep well: it’s magnificent.”

Willey and his wife, Joy (also a cyclist), still use their car. But cycling helps order their lives. “It’s always about connecting lines,” he says. “Sometimes I’ll say, ‘I don’t have time to ride; drop me off, and I’ll ride home.’ Or ‘I’ll drop you off here and pick you up there.’”

GOING THE DISTANCE

Finally, there are the health benefits. According to Willey, many Adventists have a rather narrow view of what it means to have a health message. While Adventists have been known to avoid alcohol and tobacco, they haven’t always been as careful about their use of sugar and fat, leading to significant numbers of Adventists who struggle with their weight and with related lifestyle diseases, such as heart disease and diabetes. Vigorous exercise several times a week has been shown again and again to help prevent diseases related to lifestyle. With a family history of heart disease, he says, “I’m going to break that. I don’t expect to live forever, but with little things you can improve your life and enjoy the journey.”

After decades of riding accident-free, Willey is amused by friends who say, “Oh, you’re riding home; please be careful.”

“I know things can happen,” he says. But he sees commuter biking as no more dangerous than driving 70 miles an hour in a car. It’s a calculation, and he’s comfortable with the odds.

Stephen Chavez is an assistant editor of *Adventist Review*.



Girls from different parts of the world and vastly different backgrounds get acquainted with each other.

AMIGAS POR SIEMPRE

She just wanted to be hugged.

As I walked into the courtyard, they looked at me with shy eyes. I offered a slight smile.

Oh, no. Should I not have smiled? Was that inappropriate? After what they have been through, they probably don't want to smile, much less have someone smile really big at them as if nothing had happened. I don't even know these girls yet, only the terrible thing they have experienced.

Casa Hogar is a home and place of refuge for sexually abused girls in Nicaragua. At this place girls have a safe haven to live, get treatment for emotional

recovery, learn about God, and be with other girls who can relate to what they had been through. The girls are allowed to stay as long as they need, and leave only when they feel ready to go out and face the world.

Surrounded by a big fence for safety, the home is one long, narrow building that twists around the little property and is painted many bright and happy colors. There's a room for the girls to have worship, a room for them to eat in, a kitchen, classrooms for those who did not attend school outside of the home, and several bedrooms. The plot of land is filled with mango trees, a garden, and beautiful flowers.

The home houses girls aged 7 through 19. All of them have been sexually abused.

As soon as they were introduced to our mission team, many little girls ran up and greeted us with hugs and smiles. Others were extra-quiet, standing behind the little girls trying to force a smile.

My heart broke as I met each girl, realizing that many of them were the same age as my little sister, Summer, imagining what it would be like if the same thing had happened to her.

How could a man do that to such a young, innocent girl? How could someone be so evil? The questions raced through my head.

After a day of getting to know the girls, our youth group boarded a bus and headed back to the campus we were staying at. A lump formed in my throat when our youth pastor informed us that some of the girls had been abused by their very own fathers!

Why would a father do that to his own daughter? Why? Why?

TWO ARMS WRAPPED AROUND ME

Two days later our group returned to Casa Hogar. We played a game to get to know each other, learning each other's names, favorite colors, and ages. I didn't speak Spanish very well, but we had fun trying to speak little bits of each other's language.

After the game, we gathered in a circle and sang songs. With our youth pastor translating, I shared about a time I was far from the Lord, how I came back to Him, and how much peace He has given me. I saw several pairs of watery eyes around the room.

I ended my short talk with the story in Mark 4 about Jesus calming the storm. I told the girls that just as Jesus did in my life, He could "calm the storms" and be in control of their lives if they asked Him.

"Sure, the storm may not go away completely, as it did in this story," I pointed out. "But it will be under the control of the Mighty One. Just trust Him and have faith that He will get you through it."

After I shared my story, we all headed outside. As I walked toward the basketball court, I felt two arms wrap around me from behind. Turning around, I saw a quiet girl who had teared up during my story.

Facing the girl, I smiled at her. She smiled back. I hugged her. She hugged me, and didn't let go.

We stood there for several minutes. No words, just two connecting hearts. Now I was the one tearing up. *She just wants to be loved.*

We sat by a group of girls drawing chalk pictures on the pavement. I grabbed two pieces of chalk and handed one to her.

She began to draw two stick-figure girls wearing dresses. When she finished, she pointed at one of the stick figures and pointed at herself. She pointed at the other stick figure and pointed at me. I smiled. A picture of us.

"¿Cómo te llamas?" I asked her name.

Instead of answering, she picked up her piece of chalk and began writing on the pavement: J-e-s-m-i.

"Jesmi! Your name is Jesmi." She smiled.

"What your name?" Jesmi offered in her best English.

I picked up my piece of chalk. M-o-r-g-a-n.

"Morgan!" she exclaimed in her Hispanic accent.

She hugged me again and went back to drawing on the pavement.

A-m-i-g-a-s p-o-r s-i-e-m-p-r-e. "Friends for always." She smiled. I reached over and gave her a hug. "Si, si! Amigas por siempre!" I told her.

Jesmi and I drew more pictures trying to learn what we could about each other. Then we hit a volleyball around, threw a Frisbee, and played tag with the other girls. It was cool to see how much joy a game of tag brought to these girls.

"YOU ARE LOVED"

We visited Casa Hogar one more time. Jesmi sat next to me as we all sang and shared stories.

A girl from our group told about her father leaving her and her mom. She explained how difficult it was to grow up without a father, and

how she had had so much hate for the man for many years, but had found comfort knowing that a heavenly Father loves and treasures her.

Jesmi placed her head in my lap. I stroked her hair and prayed for her. Even though she couldn't understand me, I know she could feel God's presence.

Then Jesmi sat up, her face moistened. Our eyes filled with tears.

I called Pastor Will and asked him to translate for me.

"I am so glad I've met you," I told

her. "You are a beautiful girl, and you will go far in life. I don't know what all you've been through, but I do know this: You are loved, not only by me but by a King. He created you, and He loves you. Anytime you're scared, or lonely, or just want to someone to talk to, call out to Him. Christ died just for you because He loves you that much. You are worthy, you are loved, you are special, and you are beautiful." Jesmi's face began to glow.

This young girl had felt so much pain from her own father. It was amazing to be able to tell her about a Father in heaven who loved her.

I prayed with Jesmi, and we both cried in each other's arms before we had to part. It was the hardest goodbye I've ever had to say. But I'll see Jesmi again this spring when I return to Nicaragua. 🌱

Morgan Nash is a student at Collegedale Academy near Chattanooga, Tennessee. She blogs at sunflowerserendipity.wordpress.com.



The author shares a tearful goodbye.



KEEP WATCH

We can miss what we are waiting for.

BY ELLA SIMMONS

Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully" (2 John 8).

It was far too early for us to be up and out of our hotel room. Nevertheless, Evan, our older grandson, wanted desperately to participate in the 5K run sponsored by the North American Division health ministries department during the San Antonio, Texas, General Conference session this past summer. Evan really wanted to do this, so we, his faithful grandparents, along with devoted little brother Connor, went out into the early-morning darkness to support him. All went well at check-in and bibbing, and before long the competitors were off and running. Evan was near the front of the excited sea of runners.

My husband, Connor, and I ran alongside the

racers to photograph our precious Evan. But he was much too fast for us and was out of sight in a few fleeting minutes. Though we wanted to get action shots of Evan running the course, we soon realized we couldn't intercept him as we'd hoped. So we positioned ourselves at a perfect spot near the finish line to watch him make his final approach.

Our spot was in a clear open area, so Evan could see us from his downhill path to the finish. It was not long before the first runner rounded the final corner and made his way to the finish. Our anticipation heightened as we cheered on other runners while waiting for Evan to arrive.


Time passed. Many runners now had passed our spot and crossed the finish line. After a while we began to question Evan's delay. Soon it was evident that all the runners had arrived, and the walkers were now approaching the finish line. Where was our Evan? He was an experienced long-distance runner, and so we had anticipated a much earlier return. We questioned whether he had gotten by without our notice. After a while the last group of participants began their descent toward the finish, but Evan was not among them. Had he had an accident? Was he still out on the course?

We now began to worry. Before giving in to our worst fears, we split up to search. We searched carefully until a friend called to assure us that Evan was indeed waiting for us in the finish area. At last, there he was! We had missed great action shots and videos, but we had our Evan. While comforted, we were taken aback that while we faithfully cheered and encouraged many others on to the finish, we missed the one for whom we had been patiently and carefully watching.

How could we have missed him? We knew what he looked like, knew what he was wearing, knew how he runs, and much more.

Yet we missed him.

Could it be that as we await our Lord's return, and encourage many others in life's race, that we, people of the Second Advent hope, could miss Jesus when He comes for us? It happened at the first advent, and surely it can happen again.

Let's be certain that as we watch, we are sure to actually see the One for whom we've waited. 

Ella Simmons is a general vice president of the General Conference.

ALSO IN THIS SECTION:

- » GLOBAL WARMING: IS IT REAL?
- » THE HIDDEN COSTS OF EATING MEAT
- » LIVING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE
- » ART, SCIENCE, AND THE MIND OF GOD
- » IDENTIFYING THE EARTH DESTROYERS
- » OF APPLE TREES AND SOLAR PANELS



CHRISTIANS AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Creation care or crying wolf?

The howls of wolves were unmistakable. The moon was full, and the pack was on the prowl. Inside a sparsely furnished cabin a small group of researchers huddled anxiously in a corner. Strangely, they weren't at all concerned about the hunt outside. Instead, their attention was focused on a computer screen displaying results from years of painstaking research. The story told by the graphs and statistics was as riveting as the howls that pierced the night air.

These researchers were studying the Yellowstone National Park ecosystem in the United States, where wolves were reintroduced in 1995 after being killed off nearly 70 years prior. Remarkably, the findings suggested that the presence or absence of just one species—the wolf—could potentially affect an entire ecosystem.¹

Shortly after the wolf was restored, the elk that the wolves hunted changed their behavior and moved away from their favorite grazing areas. The aspen forests and streamside vegetation began to grow again when the saplings were no longer consumed by the elk. Next, amphibians, reptiles, beavers, and songbirds staged impressive comebacks as vegetation



BY WILLIAM K. HAYES

increased. Tree roots stabilized the stream banks and reduced erosion. Beaver activities raised the water table. Thus, the wolf's presence in Yellowstone appeared not only to improve the ecology and richness of the ecosystem dramatically, but indirectly changed its physical geography as well!

So what have we learned from Yellowstone's wolves? Complex relationships exist among plants, animals, and their abiotic environment. By altering just one component, we often change that environment in unforeseen ways. The lesson is clear: we should reflect carefully on how we treat creation.

The wolf is a fitting icon of humankind's relationship to nature. Our need to subjugate nature and tame it to our liking is typified by the expression "the only good wolf is a dead wolf." Early Americans declared war on the wolf, and sought to exterminate it with bounties that resulted in the deaths of millions of wolves.

Today the tables have turned dramatically. As Americans have become more environmentally conscious, wolf preservation has become a rallying cry. Nevertheless, some continue to deplore the policies that maintain the wolf's existence in Yellowstone. Through no fault of its own, the once-feared shaggy canine has found itself at the center of a controversy between those who support and those who oppose hands-on creation care.

CARING FOR CREATION—OR CRYING WOLF?

We live on a rapidly deteriorating planet. The profound impact of humanity has been devastating and undeniable.² Almost a quarter of the earth's land area has been converted for human use. Nearly half of our tropical and temperate forests have been chopped down or bulldozed. Pollution of our air, land, and water has become pervasive. Because of our overexploitation and neglect, plants and animals are disappearing at unprecedented rates, with thousands of species becoming extinct each year. By transporting microbes, plants, and animals to new places, we have unwittingly spread diseases and greatly accelerated extinctions of native species.

Does the Creator who declared all life-forms "very good" (Gen. 1:31), who lovingly feeds and waters the creatures (Ps. 104:24-27; Isa. 43:20; Matt. 6:26), and who sees the sparrows that fall (Matt. 10:29), take notice of what has become of His creation? Does He see that "the whole creation



A person in a dark jacket is seen from behind, looking out over a scenic landscape. The scene features a calm lake reflecting the sky and mountains. In the background, there are large, rugged mountains with patches of snow or light-colored rock. The sky is filled with soft, colorful clouds, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

Curiously, numerous
published surveys reveal
that **Christians** and those
of other faith groups are
measurably **less concerned**
about environmental issues
than the public at large.

groans” (Rom. 8:22, NKJV)²³ Of course He does.

Some Christians express more concern about the current state of God’s creation than others. Many read in Scripture a clear mandate for us to care for creation, yet others see implicit permission to plunder it. Curiously, numerous published surveys reveal that Christians and those of other faith groups are measurably less concerned about environmental issues than the public at large.⁴ Why should this be?

At least three reasons explain the indifference or even anti-environmental sentiments of some Christians.

First, some argue from dominion theology (Gen. 1:26, 28) that God permits humans to exploit natural resources without concern for consequences.

Second, our eschatological views lead some to insist we need not be concerned about our earthly home and its creatures because this world will be destroyed and re-created at the second coming of Jesus.

Third, the aforementioned studies show that environmental attitudes can be strongly influenced by political leanings and media exposure.⁵



GLOBAL WARMING IS IT REAL?

BY FLOYD HAYES

Considerable scientific evidence indicates that the earth’s temperature has fluctuated naturally over time, based on geological features, ice cores, sediment cores, tree rings, historical accounts, photographs, and thermometers. For example, a period of relatively balmy temperatures, known as the Medieval Warm Period, occurred from about A.D. 800 to 1300, fol-

lowed by a relatively cool period, dubbed the Little Ice Age, from about A.D. 1300 to 1850. During the past century the planet has been gradually warming, a trend often referred to as “global warming.”

DO WE HAVE IT WRONG?

The concept of global warming is often misunderstood and misconstrued. Although some dismiss

Many Christians take offense at the secular view that the creation came about by natural processes over millions or billions of years. Yet some of these same Christians express anger toward those who believe we should care about that which remains of creation. They denounce government efforts to curb environmental damage. They believe that many environmental concerns are grossly distorted, and serve surreptitious purposes. They insist that pro-environmental scientists and politicians—and those Christians who agree with them—are crying wolf.

WHY WE SHOULD CARE

So how should Seventh-day Adventists and other Christians relate to the creation? Here are four reasons I believe we should embrace environmental stewardship.

1 GOD EXPECTS US TO CARE

Scripture makes a compelling case for environmental stewardship. Properly understood, the “dominion” given humans to “rule” over all living things and “subdue” the Earth (Gen. 1:26, 28) refers to His expectations for us to take care of the land



it as a hoax, *global warming is a scientific observation* based on analyses of data from approximately 6,000 thermometer stations forming the Global Historical Climatology Network. The data unequivocally reveals a warming trend during the past century, resulting in melting glaciers, melting of the Arctic ice cap (but not the Antarctic ice cap), and rising

sea levels. The trend has been inconsistent: warming waxed strongly during the early and latter decades of the 1900s and waned somewhat during the mid-1900s and early 2000s.

Although virtually all scientists agree that the earth is warmer today than it was a century ago, there is less agreement about the causes of global warming. *Anthropogenic global warming is a scientific hypothesis* postulating that global warming is caused primarily by human activities. The evidence is simple. Scientists have known for more than a century that greenhouse gases occurring naturally in the atmosphere trap heat, and that burning fossil fuels, deforestation, and certain agricultural practices release massive amounts of greenhouse gases (especially carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrogen oxides) into the atmosphere. Because atmospheric greenhouse gases and temperatures have both increased since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, it is logical for scientists to hypothesize that there is a cause-and-effect relationship.

Today there is a strong consensus among climate scientists that

human activities are the major culprit for rising temperatures, but they recognize that climate is also affected by natural factors, such as variation in solar radiation and volcanic activity. Regardless of the causes of global warming, many scientists predict catastrophic impacts on natural ecosystems and human societies if global warming continues. If indeed human activities are the major cause of global warming, some believe that only a concerted effort led by governments can mitigate the adverse effects of a hotter and more crowded planet. This is a major point of contention among the skeptics, including some prominent scientists who object to government intervention. Some skeptics deny that the planet is warming; others accept the reality of global warming but believe it has ceased. Although some skeptics concede that human activities affect climate, they all believe natural factors have a much stronger effect.

Floyd Hayes, Ph.D., is a professor of biology at Pacific Union College in Angwin, California. Hayes's research focuses on the ecology, behavior, and biogeography of birds and symbiotic relationships of coral reef organisms.



THE HIDDEN COSTS OF EATING MEAT

BY JOAN SABATÉ AND SAM SORET

According to the Genesis account, the original diet for humans was different from that of animals. After the Fall, the foods for human consumption also included those originally reserved for animals. Subsequently, animals became part of the human diet. Thus, the trophic competition started on our planet. Not only humankind was now eating the food assigned to animals, but also the animals themselves. This has brought about profound consequences.

Today the market offers a variety of foods to nourish our bodies. Just as different types of foods at the market have different prices, the production of each type of food has a different environmental cost. In other words, the environmental footprint and the production efficiency vary from food to food. Raising animals for human food is an intrinsically inefficient process.¹

As we move up in the trophic chain, there is a progressive loss of energy and an increasing use of resources. Growing grain to feed animals for human consumption is obviously less efficient than using the same grain to feed humans directly. The amount of grain needed to produce the same amount of meat varies from a ratio of 2.3 for chicken to 13 for beef. Using agricultural data from California, we have shown that the production of protein from beef requires 18 times more land, 10 times more water, 9 times more fuel, 12 times more fertilizer, and 10 times more pesticide than the production of the same amount of protein from beans.²

Meat and dairy products are also responsible for a hefty share of the environmental burden of food production. Modern animal farms damage the environment by the concentration of animal waste and by chemical runoff to water and land, causing many problems such as surface and groundwater contamination, oceanic “dead zones,” soil degradation, hab-

itat change, and biodiversity loss. Meat production also pollutes the air, contributing disproportionately to greenhouse gas emissions (carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide) to the atmosphere. We have found that the emissions of acidifying substances, pesticides, and toxic metals are, respectively, seven, six, and 100 times greater for meat protein compared with soy.³ Thus, the intensive production of meat is considerably more taxing to the environment than nutritionally equivalent plant protein foods.

As meat production has multiple detrimental effects on the environment, the consumption of meat has deleterious effects on human health. Recent findings from the Adventist Health Study reveal that those who consume meatless diets enjoy better health and longevity, while at the same time reducing their carbon footprint by 30 percent, compared to those who eat meat regularly.⁴ Following meatless diets promotes simultaneously human and planetary health. With this dietary choice, we honor God, not only by taking care of our body, the temple of the Holy Spirit, but also of the “cosmic temple,” God’s nonhuman creation.

¹ J. Sabaté and S. Soret, “Sustainability of Plant-based Diets: Back to the Future,” *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 100 (2014): 476S-482S.

² J. Sabaté, K. Sranacharoeng, H. Harwatt, M. Wien, and S. Soret, “The Environmental Cost of Protein Food Choices,” *Public Health Nutrition* 18, no. 11 (August 2015): 2067-2073.

³ L. Reijnders and S. Soret, “Quantification of the Environmental Impact of Different Dietary Protein Choices,” *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 78 (2003): 664S-668S.

⁴ S. Soret, A. Mejia, M. Batech, K. Jaceldo-Siegl, H. Harwatt, and J. Sabaté, “Climate Change Mitigation and Health Effects of Varied Dietary Patterns in Real-life Settings Throughout North America,” *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 100 (2014): 490S-495S.

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(Ex. 23:10, 11; Lev. 25:2-7, 23, 24) and to treat animals humanely by providing them sufficient food and rest (Ex. 23:5, 12; Deut. 25:4), rescuing them from harm (Matt. 12:11), and never torturing them (Num. 22:23-33). The world and everything in it belongs to God, not us (Lev. 25:23; Ps. 24:1; 1 Cor. 6:15-20, 10:26). God even authorized the first “environmental protection act” (Gen. 2:15) and the first “endangered species act” (Gen. 6:19).

Clearly, God expects His appointed rulers of creation to exercise benevolent, selfless stewardship (Ps. 72:8-14; Eze. 34:2-4; Matt. 20:26, 27).

② CARING BRINGS US INTO COMMUNION WITH THE CREATOR

Christians who seek to preserve creation recognize the clear relationship between our understandings of nature and God: “But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish in the sea inform you” (Job 12:7, 8).

Ellen White urged upon us the importance of studying and preserving God’s creation. “God has surrounded us with nature’s beautiful scenery to attract and interest the mind. It is His design that we should associate the glories of nature with His character. If we faithfully study the book of nature, we shall find it a fruitful source for contemplating the infinite love and power of God.”⁶

Indeed, let’s study nature, learn from it, and preserve it for future generations to do the same!

③ WE SHOULD CARE FOR ECONOMIC REASONS

God has bequeathed to us extraordinary natural resources that make our lives comfortable and productive. But these resources are finite and subject to overexploitation.

We can characterize natural resources as *ecosystem services*, which we depend upon for our very existence. They include provision of food and water; pollination of native and agricultural plants; cycling of nutrients; moderation of extreme weather, including flood and drought mitigation; protection against erosion; regulation of plant pest and human disease organisms; decomposition and detoxification of wastes; purification of air and water; and maintenance of biodiversity. These services, provided to us for free, have been valued globally at \$125

trillion per year.⁷ Obviously, they’re irreplaceable.

Without these services, which we are rapidly degrading, our quality of life—and that of future generations—would be fundamentally diminished.

④ WE SHOULD CARE FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE REASONS

Healthy humans need healthy environments that provide natural resources and processes that sustain human life. Unhealthy environments provide diminished ecosystem services and promote disease, tension, conflict, and inequality. Sadly, those who are poor and impoverished usually bear the brunt of problems that arise from unhealthy environments. Selfish individuals and corporations often conduct business in ways that exploit the environment and diminish its capacity to sustain local people. Wealthy nations often benefit at the expense of developing nations.

Lax environmental regulations or corrupt disregard of them threaten the health and livelihoods of millions. An estimated one in seven human deaths in 2012 resulted from exposure to soil, water, and/or air pollution, and 93 percent of these 9 million preventable deaths were in developing countries.⁸ As Christians, we should have the loudest voices in defending the victims of environmental injustice, which include not just humans but also other life forms.

A NEED FOR CRITICAL THINKING

As followers of Jesus, we have an obligation to care for creation and to alleviate human suffering whenever we can. Yet understanding how we should do so is made more difficult by the polarized opinions we hear. When it comes to environmental issues, we should seek to become informed by the most reliable sources. We should recognize the language of propaganda that we encounter daily in the media and blogosphere, often from pundits who understand little about complicated interactions of the natural world. We need to be open-minded to the possibility of holding wrong views, apply critical thinking to the best of our abilities, and treat with respect the views that others hold, even if we believe they are wrong.

As it turns out, further study has questioned the primary role of wolves in restoring Yellowstone’s ecosystem. Although the wolves certainly

LIVING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

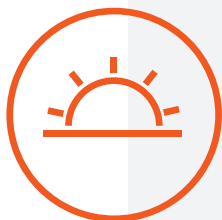
BY MELISSA R. PRICE

Seventh-day Adventists value living simply, modestly, and without excess.¹ We live out our values through our diet, our practice of Sabbath rest, and our choices as consumers. At its core, Creation care is based on these same principles.



HOW TO EAT

A balanced, plant-based vegetarian lifestyle, long adhered to because of health benefits, is also gentler on the planet. Switching to a plant-based diet reduces global hunger, improves water quality, and reduces the amount of forest destroyed each year in the expansion of the cattle industry.



HOW TO REST

We Seventh-day Adventists observe the Sabbath, a day in which God rested from work and commanded His children, their employees, and the animals in their care to rest as well. In this practice of resting from our work and our shopping, we rebel against a consumer culture that pushes us to do more, accumulate more, and covet more.²

Our practice of Sabbath rest must change the way we live our lives the rest of the week so we are mindful of the forests that were cut down to build larger homes, the minerals mined so we can juggle three electronic devices while watching TV, and the pesticides, fertilizers, and herbicides sprayed so we can add a few more items to our closets. On the Sabbath we remember the God who provides for all our needs so that we may consider the needs of others.



HOW TO BUY

With more than 7.3 billion people in the world, there are limited amounts of food, medical supplies, and other commodities for every person on the planet. Every choice in the direction of excess takes away from the basic needs of others. We wield a tremendous amount of power with our credit cards.

How can we use that power? Learn where our products come from, and where our waste goes. Buy used or recycled products. Take care of what you have. Purchase only what you need. Avoid plastic products and packaging. Drive less. Bike or walk more. Buy seasonally appropriate foods grown locally. Plant a garden. Make your own food. Compost green waste. Value the living things God created. Ask your representatives to vote for policies that protect the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the natural spaces that form God's second book. Choose to live simply so that others can simply live. (See more tips at www.50waystohelp.com.)

God has provided for our needs. Let's carry our Sabbath rest with us throughout the week, guided by the principles of simplicity, modesty, and limited consumption.

Rest. We have enough.

¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimony Treasures* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1949), vol. 2, p. 553.

² Barbara Brown Taylor, *The Practice of Saying No* (Nashville: Harper-Collins Publishers, 2012), pp. 1-26.

Melissa R. Price, Ph.D., is an assistant professor in the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Management at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

The church's institutions currently allocate negligible resources toward what could be a powerful witness via creation care.

contribute by preying on the elk, the picture appears to be more complicated than originally believed, as it also involves interactions among bison, beavers, human hunting, rainfall patterns, and temperature changes.⁹ As a human enterprise, science has its imperfections, but when used correctly to test alternative hypotheses, it is eventually self-correcting. Science provides a way of gaining knowledge and insight about the creation; it is God's gift to help us gain understanding.

WITNESSING THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

The indifference of many Christians toward environmental issues prompted renowned Harvard biologist E. O. Wilson to publish in 2006 his insightful book *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth*. Couched in the form of a series of letters to a fictitious Baptist minister, Wilson pleaded for Christians to join the largely secular effort to save what remains of the creation. In his words: "Science and religion are two of the most potent forces on Earth, and they should come together to save the Creation."

It seems ironic, with the elevated view our church holds toward the original act of Creation, that any of us would be indifferent toward caring for it. Yet, for the most part, Adventists and other Christians have stood idle while nonbelievers have taken the lead in creation care. If we would work together, imagine our opportunities to witness, especially to those most in need of a knowledge of Christ!

Personally, I am proud to belong to a church that takes the study of God's second book—nature—seriously. The Adventist Church has embraced environmental stewardship with several official statements.¹⁰ With these statements, the denomination acknowledges that "the ecological crisis is rooted in humankind's greed and refusal to practice good and faithful stewardship within the divine boundaries of creation." But in spite of these statements of support, the church's institutions currently allocate negligible resources toward what could be a powerful witness via creation care.

CREATION FULLY RESTORED

Although sin has marred God's original creation, we can still see His handiwork. We have been tasked to ensure that the signature of God's handiwork remains for all to see and benefit from. It is a gift from God; we show our gratitude by appreciating it. We can also contrast the present creation with that of the original, which will one day be restored. We have been given a brief glimpse of how different things will be one day for the iconic predator of Yellowstone: "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them" (Isa. 11:6).

Now, that's an ecosystem we should all long to experience, and it's one that I will want to study one day! 🍌

¹ For a useful review, see A. P. Dobson, "Yellowstone Wolves and the Forces That Structure Natural Systems," *PLOS Biology* 12, no. 12 (2014): e1002025, <http://tinyurl.com/qamzfaaw>.

² W. K. Hayes and F. E. Hayes, "What Is the Relationship Between Human Activity and Species Extinction?" in S. G. Dunbar, L. J. Gibson, and H. M. Rosi, eds., *Entrusted: Christians and Environmental Care* (Mexico: Adventus International University Publishers, 2013), pp. 183-197, <http://tinyurl.com/pvj3ab2>.

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⁴ J. M. Clements et al., "Green Christians? An Empirical Examination of Environmental Concern Within the U.S. General Public," *Organization and Environment* 27, no. 1 (2014): 27:85-102, <http://tinyurl.com/jjy4qwx>.

⁵ Examples include A. Williams, "Media Evolution and Public Understanding of Climate Science," *Politics and the Life Sciences* 30, no. 2 (2011): 20-30, <http://tinyurl.com/pgs9ck9>; M. Feinberg and R. Willer, "The Moral Roots of Environmental Attitudes," *Psychological Science* 24, no. 1 (2013): 56-62, <http://tinyurl.com/mb5w98b>.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *My Life Today* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1952), p. 294.

⁷ R. Costanza et al., "Changes in Global Value of Ecosystem Services," *Global Environmental Change* 26 (2014): 152-158, <http://tinyurl.com/jt7bqw9>.

⁸ Pure Earth (www.pureearth.org/) provides sobering details in their annual reports at www.worstpolluted.org/.

⁹ Again, see Dobson.

¹⁰ www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements.

William K. Hayes, Ph.D., M.S., is a professor of biology and director of the Center for Biodiversity and Conservation Studies at Loma Linda University.

10,000,000,000

The number of animals used annually for food, almost all of which are raised on factory farms (**CAFOs—Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations**). Animals are often fed unnatural foods and suffer painful practices.



75% SHORTER LIFESPAN

The average life of a CAFO cow is 4 years and then slaughter, compared to 16 years for the naturally raised animal.



LONGER LIFESPAN

National Geographic has shown that a balanced plant-based diet is one of the key reasons Seventh-day Adventists are living up to 7–10 years longer than their North American neighbors.



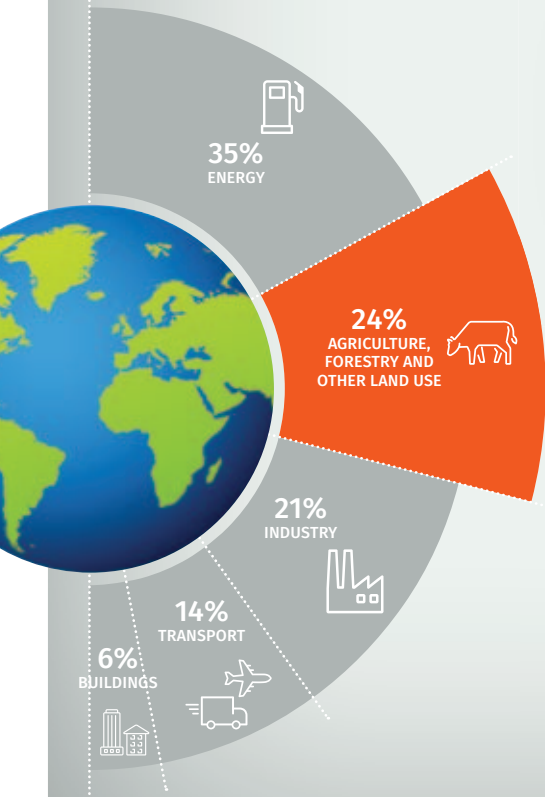
40 BILLION HAMBURGERS ARE EATEN IN THE U.S. EACH YEAR.



These are just some of the results of global warming and climate change that could potentially be prevented if we would stop deforestation and mass monoculture to raise animals for food. A plant-based diet is a sustainable diet that avoids the pitfalls of intensive CAFOs.

{CANCER}

That's what the World Health Organization says may be the result of eating red meat.



24%

The share of identified man-made greenhouse gases responsible for global warming and climate change. These gases are attributed to raising food for animals, deforestation to raise that food, or the raising of the animals themselves—often in CAFOs. Some believe we are eating our way into environmental collapse.

INTELLIGENCE AND EMOTIONS

are what scientific studies confirm exist in animals, indicating that animals experience pain and suffering.

LOVE, FEAR, AND SUFFERING

Ellen White wrote that animals experience love, fear, suffering, and can show sympathy and feel tenderness and affection.

Mission Possible

This mission is possible. Jesus called and trained 12 permanent disciples (Luke 9:1-6). But it soon became clear that the task was too great for such a small group. He then recruited 70 secondary disciples to partner with them (Luke 10:1-12, NKJV).^{*} Before giving them their assignment, He said, “The harvest is plentiful,” referring to souls who, like crops, were ripe and ready and must be quickly brought into the kingdom of God (verses 1-3). In the natural harvest, if crops are not harvested when ready, they rot and are good for nothing. So in the spiritual realm the enemy will spoil them.

“Plentiful” means abundant, overflowing, bumper crops. But in the original language it also means good produce, those who were not Teflon, who were sticking-with-the-cause kind of souls. They were solid, stable seekers on whom the expansion of the kingdom could be established. The plentiful harvest also indicates that there was more than enough work for many laborers in this urgent mission.

“But the workers are few” (verse 2). The estimated population in the region then was more than 3 million. Jesus had only 12 permanent plus 70 secondary disciples to evangelize them. We have a similar situation today. Out of 7.325 billion people on our planet, an estimated 2 billion people claim to be adherents of Christianity. This is a disparate and desperate situation from a natural perspective. But from God’s vantage point, His mission is possible if we:

“Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers” (verse 2). The original word translated “ask” literally means to beg or plead. It connotes urgency and fervency. Jesus also used a very strong

word, *ekballo*, to send, throw, drive, or turn out with no room for return (see also 1 John 4:18).

The word “sent” or “send” appears three times in verses Luke 10:1-3. In verses 1 and 3 it is *apostello*, to send out, from which we get our word apostle. But in verse 2 Jesus used *ekballo*. Why? Could it be that laborers were already called, appointed, and trained, but had become so complacent they needed “a swift kick” to wake them up to realize the harvest is ripe and ready? Maybe it’s not that there’s a lack of laborers, but that a lot are merely spectators in the church.

There are laborers who faithfully attend church, tithe, and give generous offerings, but when it comes to going out into the highways and byways, they make excuses to avoid participation (cf. Luke 9:57-62). If we don’t “go” (Matt. 28:19), God will provide workers, even those who are not of our fold (cf. Luke 9:49, 50).

The harvest is the Lord’s, not ours; we are just His laborers. It is not our field; it is our assignment to fulfill all that is instructed by the Lord of the harvest. But how dependent are we on the Lord of the harvest? The greatest laborers work in faith, and, like children, are totally dependent, trusting fully on the Lord for the resources to bring in the harvest.

Notice the difference when the disciples submitted faithfully to Jesus’ formula: they discovered for themselves that this mission is possible (Luke 10:17-20).

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BACK TO
BASICS
HYVETH
WILLIAMS



THE DISCIPLES
DISCOVERED
FOR THEMSELVES
THAT THIS MISSION
IS POSSIBLE.

*Making sense of
Revelation 11:18*

IDENTIFYING THE EARTH DESTROYERS



BY KEITH AUGUSTUS BURTON

The blast of the seventh angel's trumpet indicates the beginning of the salvation moment that has been anticipated since sin entered human reality (Rev. 11:15-19). The suffering saints who had endured a season of unparalleled persecution are ready to witness their faith becoming sight as the kingdom of the world is annexed into the kingdom of our Lord and His Messiah. This is not just the end of a battle; it's the end of a war. In fact, it's the end of all wars. There are no treaties, surrenders, or retreats. This war ushers in a period of eternal peace, during which Messiah reigns forever and ever.

SERIOUS BUSINESS

Before the inaugural formalities can take place, the Ruler of the universe must take care of serious business. Those who have been victorious must be officially recognized in a ceremony that is probably witnessed by a multiuniversal audience. This is the "time of judgment," during which four global groups are endowed with eternal life (verse 18).¹ The labels they bear tell us something about their spiritual résumés. They are "slaves," who had submitted their entire wills to God. They are "prophets," who proclaimed truth to power in the face of certain peril. They are "saints," who allowed themselves to be sanctified by God's truth. They are "those who fear God's name," when others had pledged their allegiance to Satan.

For these four groups, judgment is indeed good news. To their ears, the trumpet sound is a mere prelude to a New Orleans-style "second line" celebration. However, there is a fifth group in the judgment chamber. These are not on the elevated podia with the others who receive garland wreaths for their stellar accomplishments. They are crowded in an inglorious docket made gloomy by their own dismay. These are the resurrected wicked, who await their judgment. They are the ones who chose to be slaves to another master; who cherished error and persecuted God's prophets; who reveled in hedonism; who disdained the very name of their Maker.

Given their wide array of infractions, John could have used any number of terms to describe this wretched mob. But for some strange reason he describes their judgment as one in which God "destroys those who are destroying the earth." There is no mention of their idolatry, adultery, sodomy, larceny, treachery, bestiality, gluttony, or

revelry. The one term that defines them is “earth destroyers,” which begs the question “Why did He choose this designation?”

Interestingly, the seventh trumpet is just one component of a double-purposed prophecy. The other component is associated with the third “woe,” the first two of which corresponded with the fifth and sixth trumpets. When the fifth trumpet is sounded along with the first woe, the attacking locusts are ironically commanded to torture the God haters mercilessly, but not to harm “the grass of the earth or any plant or tree” (Rev. 9:4, NIV).² Given the dietary preferences of locusts, this command gives reason for pause. Of course we know that the main focus of the first woe is the initial punishment of the wicked, but could this be the set up for the later reference to the “earth destroyers”? Could this be an indicator of God’s concern and care for His inanimate creation?

GOD’S CREATION

Even a quick perusal of Scripture provides a picture of a Creator who is intimately entwined with the work of His hand. Humans may have been the crowning act of Creation, but as the psalmist recognizes, all of “the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament demonstrates his artisanship” (Ps. 19:1). His attention to detail is inescapable when one considers “the lilies of the field” (Matt. 6:28). These floral beauties don’t have to work for or make their own garbs, but not even Solomon with all his wealth could find a fashion designer to create a garment that could rival nature’s wardrobe.

Not only does the earth yield objects of beauty, but also within it resides the miraculous elixir for the sustenance of all life. In its intricate laboratory God had placed everything that was necessary to produce “trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food” (Gen. 2:9, NIV). Animate and inanimate life-forms alike were destined to have a symbiotic relationship with the earth that was to be carefully “subdued” (see Gen. 1:28). Although significantly altered to the point of hostility, this relationship continued after sin (Gen. 3:17-19). Further, although on a seven-yearly—rather than weekly—schedule, the earth was gifted with a Sabbath, just like humans and animals (Lev. 25:1-7).

Sadly, as humans move further away from God,

they become less concerned about His creation. Not only do they behave cruelly to each other, but their wickedness extends to their treatment of the animal kingdom and the environment. When the Judeans are exiled to Babylon, they are specifically informed that their 70-year sentence had been determined by their long time neglect of the land (2 Chron. 36:21). Now, in the absence of their human tormentors, the overworked land would have an opportunity to redeem the centuries of Sabbaths of which it had been deprived.

Fast-forward to the judgment scene in the seventh trumpet’s third woe (Rev. 11:18). Could it be that those who share Babylon’s end-time fate are called “earth destroyers” because their selfish actions have been so devastating on the environment? Could these be the warmongers whose weapons of mass destruction considered nuclear devastated vegetation among their “collateral damage”? Could these be the opulent dwellers of grand estates whose luxurious home comforts and extensive motorized fleets were highly subsidized by ozone-depleting deforestation? Could these be the masses who are so self-medicated by destructive media that they fail to recognize that “*all of creation is groaning for deliverance*” (Rom. 8:22)?

In light of our devastated environment, it’s probably no coincidence that the first angel announces the hour of God’s judgment with a call to worship the One who made “heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (Rev. 14:7). Could this be a reminder that our allegiance to our Creator also demands our commitment to reverential stewardship over His creation? Yes, we know that when He returns He will make all things new, but are we not still called to faithfully tend the global garden until He returns?

In our consideration of the possible identity of the “earth destroyers,” as professed citizens of God’s final edenic kingdom let’s ensure that our everyday choices reflect love for each other and for the environment that not only nurtures us but also groans with us.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations have been translated by the author.

² Texts credited to NIV are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Keith Augustus Burton, Ph.D., is an associate professor in the School of Religion at Oakwood University, and also serves as director of the Center for Adventist-Muslim Relations.



PETER N. LANDLESS

Do Megadose Vitamins Help Prevent Dementia?

Q: I have a family history of dementia and have been advised that megadoses of vitamin supplements will help to prevent my having the same problem. My pastor is selling a megadose vitamin supplement to our church members; do you advise me to use these? Are there other preventative interventions?

A: You raise a number of concerns on this important topic. The incidence of various forms of dementia is increasing, and many are worried about their future, just as you are. This concern increases as, for example, we sometimes find ourselves struggling to remember names. This may occur as we grow older, but does not necessarily imply the presence of dementia per se. Many factors contribute to mild forgetfulness, such as lack of sleep, emotional stress, domestic crises, or personal or family illness.

I question the ethics of a pastor/pastoral spouse who sells products of any kind to their congregation. This is blatant conflict of interest and abuses the sacred role of the pastorate. Congregants in this setting represent a "captive audience," leaving them with feelings of disloyalty if they do not purchase the proffered wares, or a feeling of guilt if they do not support the pastor's financial venture!

Additionally, it is a sad fact that although many pastors have an interest in health matters, relatively few have formal training in health; this is a problem that General Conference Health Ministries has attempted to address over the years, by crafting and teaching courses on the foundations of health to pastors around the world. This helps them understand and apply health principles in their own lives, and impart reliable information to the churches and communities that they serve. It provides pastors with tools that help discern facts versus hype. It is our prayer and desire that formal health training be implemented as requirements into every seminary training program.



Everyone should be trained in health, commencing in childhood! Ellen White wrote: "A practical knowledge of the science of human life is necessary in order to glorify God in our bodies. It is therefore of the highest importance that among the studies selected for childhood, physiology should occupy the first place. . . . Many are drifting about without knowledge, like a ship at sea without compass or anchor; and what is more, they are not interested to learn how to keep their bodies in a healthy condition and prevent disease."*

There is no evidence that megadoses of vitamins, especially where there is not a deficiency, help in the prevention of dementia. They can be harmful.

What does help? Regular exercise; regular healthy sleep habits; a balanced vegetarian diet rich in phytochemicals, naturally occurring vitamins, and minerals; and, in those choosing a total vegetarian diet, supplementation of vitamin B₁₂. Meditation on the Word, works, and ways of God, and a strong purpose for living, are also useful preventatives!

In short, live the Adventist health message wholistically, and the start of cognitive dysfunction may be delayed. Progression of the inevitable may be delayed as well. 🍌

*Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1923), p. 38.

Peter N. Landless, a board-certified nuclear cardiologist, is director of the General Conference Health Ministries Department.



Chaplains

A film by Martin Doblmeier, Journey Films, 2015, 120 minutes, US\$19.95.

The first thing you'll notice when you watch *Chaplains*, Martin Doblmeier's newest documentary film, is that the term *chaplain* is much more far-reaching than anything you might have imagined.

Most of us are familiar with military chaplains, chaplains who serve in health-care settings, as well as chaplains who minister to those who are incarcerated. But Doblmeier, in his typically thorough method, takes viewers into a world in which chaplains serve in corporate, law-enforcement, legislative, and even professional sports settings.

Not only should the filmmaker be commended for exposing the wide spectrum of chaplaincy ministries—Doblmeier also deserves kudos for profiling the ministries of different faith traditions (Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism) and how they are often different facets of the same ministry. In 10 segments viewers see and hear from chaplains who often guide people through the intersection of faith, life, death, joy, sadness, and transition.

Summer Fades

Summer Fades, Amanda Bews, Signs Publishing, 2015, 280 pages, US\$9.99, softcover.

Summer is a teenager trying to navigate the typical challenges of teenagerhood: friends, boys, parents, job, and school. But the plot thickens when Summer is forced to face the fact that she struggles with a problem she can barely admit to herself, one she tries desperately to hide from everyone else.

Amanda Bews has done a nice job capturing the joys, challenges, and insecurities of teenagers. In this piece of evocative literature she accurately portrays how these insecurities contribute to compulsive behaviors and the desperate desires of teenagers to “fit in.”

Summer Fades is not a book for adult readers, unless they're interested in knowing what it's like to be a teenager in today's multisensory environment. The author's intended audience, and the one with whom she clearly connects, is made up of those who are trying to find their way while various voices compete for their attention.

The spiritual component of Summer's struggles are implied throughout most of the book. But only

Of special interest to Adventists is Doblmeier's profile of Barry Black, chaplain of the U.S. Senate and a Seventh-day Adventist. But also fascinating are Rabbi Arthur Rosenberg's ministry to retired Hollywood actors, and Khalil Refai's ministry as a bridge between the Hamtramck (Michigan) Police Department and its rapidly growing Muslim community.

This documentary, broadcast on public television in November, is an inspiring account of the joys and challenges of serving others as a chaplain. It is an out-



in later chapters is she introduced to Pastor Percy, and she begins to grasp the transforming power of God's love, although her parents are portrayed as loving and supportive throughout her battle toward wholeness.

Summer Fades seems to be Signs Publishing's attempt to take spiritual concepts to an audience that is not only not Adventist, but not particularly Christian, either. Not a lot of Christian doctrine is communicated in the pages of this book, but readers are left with the distinct impression that God can be trusted to provide solutions to our problems, as well as walk with us until we find those solutions for ourselves.

Stephen Chavez is an assistant editor of *Adventist Review*.

standing resource for anyone considering chaplaincy as a career. And the Journey Films Web site (JourneyFilms.com/chaplains) offers a helpful bibliography for further reading.

Chaplains is also a reminder that as long as people face life challenges, our communities need people who aren't afraid to listen when people are hurting, and who provide appropriate, spirit-filled counsel and encouragement. They may be us.

Stephen Chavez is an assistant editor of *Adventist Review*.

For a New You: FitStar

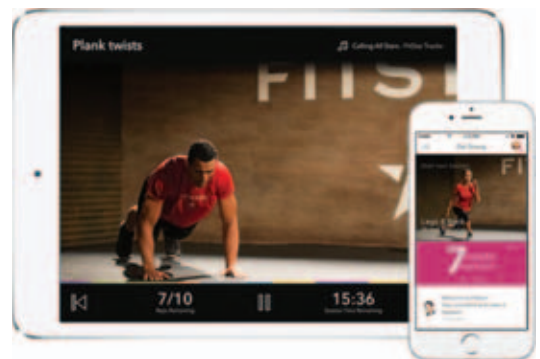
This time of year always sees a spike in gym attendance. Indeed, for those opting to make the new year the time for putting those fitness goals into action, new gym memberships are a hot commodity.

But what if you didn't need a gym to get in shape? Even better, what if you could access a personal trainer without a gym, a hefty price tag, and anytime you want? I'd say fitness veterans and "resolutioner" newbies would both be interested.

FitStar is one such app that delivers those things, offering you challenging and effective workouts catered to your unique needs, goals, and levels, with coaching based on the feedback you provide. Thus, this app is both functional and interactive. And all on your phone (or iPad or laptop). While not a brand-new release for 2016, it is a revolutionary product that according to *Huffington Post* is truly an "app that takes your capabilities, goals, and feedback into account, creating truly personalized and transformative fitness programs. With football legend Tony Gonzalez giving coaching tips while the moves are demonstrated, it really is like traveling with your own personal trainer."

Free to download, with premium options available for \$7.99/month or \$39.99/year.

Wilona Karimabadi is an assistant editor of *Adventist Review*.



OUR MAGNIFICENT CREATOR

God's creation is a constant reminder of His love, grace, and creativity. And for most Seventh-day Adventists, the Sabbath is when we have the freedom—indeed, the responsibility—to enjoy and be aware of God's creation. What are your favorite Sabbath memories, and how do they reinforce your concept of God? —*Editors.*

My most precious Sabbath memories have always involved the great outdoors. As a child growing up in the Fort Walton Beach, Florida, church, our whole congregation would go camping for the weekend at Florida's Blackwater River State Park. We'd float down the shallow river, occasionally stopping on smooth, white sandbars to picnic, explore, and talk about God's beautiful creation.

Then we'd set up camp along the banks, belt out praise songs by campfire light, and fall asleep in our cozy tents listening to the hum of crickets and the call of whippoorwills.

When I was a young adult serving as a student missionary in Pohnpei, Micronesia, Sabbath afternoons often involved jungle hikes to roaring waterfalls, snorkeling along colorful coral reefs in warm salt water, and sneaking onto second-story

roofs to lie in silence under a heavy blanket of twinkling stars. For me, creation is the tangible hem of the Savior's cloak.

Alicia Goree Adams, *Camarillo, California*

Hiking and getting close to nature, I thank God for everything He has made, and how what He made is more beautiful than anything ever touched by humanity. He speaks through the breeze and the little birds singing. The trees sway and move gracefully and maybe I see a nest of ladybugs. Even the fragrance tells of a loving Creator. I feel refreshed and happy.

Linda Anderson, *Hermosa Beach, California*

Igrew up on a Seventh-day Adventist academy campus. On many Sabbath afternoons my father would borrow a microscope from the academy lab, and my sister and I would walk around, taking samples of anything that could be placed under a microscope lens: a feather, spiderweb, ladybug—even a flower seed would do. Our task was then to carefully draw and classify what we saw. Our love for God's nature was increased as a result of that rewarding Sabbath afternoon activity.

Ester Block, *Ottawa, Ontario*

One Friday the winds blew and blew. The next day we went out to see what had been destroyed.

At my sister's business we found a nest. We took the nest inside and took out the newspaper





the mommy bird had used to make her home, along with colored string, sticks, pieces of plastic, and many other treasures. Then we went outside and looked around to see if we could find some of the things that went into making the nest. It was a fun Sabbath afternoon.

Also, I remember taking dandelion blossoms, have the kids blow them off the stalk, and tell them that they were God's helicopters. I used many things in nature to show them their heavenly Father's creation.

Deb Cash, *Hawthorne, Nevada*

At Hobble Creek Canyon, outside Springville, Utah, we often spent Sabbath afternoons with the Smiths on their ranch. There was always more food than we could eat, and we hiked through the canyons to the sound of birds tweeting and water flowing. God's majestic love was everywhere we looked.

Patricia Farley, *Detroit, Michigan*

Best and most vivid were the Sabbath afternoons my family went for a picnic. Afterward my mother would take my brother and me to a nearby hillside, meadow, or stream, and we'd learn to identify the flowers, trees, or birds, or just lie on a blanket and chat, or imagine different shapes in the clouds.

Sometimes my mother read us a story. Sometimes we'd press flowers or chase butterflies with butterfly nets she made us. Other times we'd have picnics with a group of friends, two or three families. I enjoyed listening to them discuss religion.

Lynetta Murdoch, *Beltsville, Maryland*

Every Sabbath after lunch my father, Dr. Otto J. Neufeld, would lead a clutch of children and a duet of cocker spaniels "up the road-a," a dirt track behind our home. A God-loving and quiet

man, he by turns led and followed us on the short half-mile trek to the dead end. It seems like such an insignificant kind of outing, no fancy clothing or gear needed. Yet he took the time to show us interesting bits of nature: the benign bamboo stand, hollowed out with log seats inside, or a (fortunately) dead rattlesnake stretched across the dusty road. Dad often reminded me to stop looking at my feet (obviously because of the rattlesnake), and to look up at the infinitely fascinating world around us. On those simple walks he taught us to appreciate God's creativity.

Denise Pereya, *La Cañada, California*

One of my favorite Sabbath activities is to take a Lifestyle guest or other visitor for the weekend about two miles west of here and 1,400 feet higher to watch the sun rise. I like to pray that our experience with God will be as deep as the chasm below us, as high as the mountains yet beyond us, or as peaceful as the stillness that surrounds us in these high and wild places. The view from the summit of South Peak will thrill all but the most dispassionate soul.

John Raymond Roeske, *Loveland, Colorado*

In college we would pile into several cars and bring baskets of food and drinks to a nearby creek. We would have a picnic and take a hike, followed by a short nap under the shade of the trees. Some would bring a guitar and get the others to sing along. I stuck to my nap. Since I worked full-time and had a full load of classes, it was the only day of the week I could take a nap. Ah, nap, under the shade of a tree, listening to the whisper of the creek and the voices of the other kids singing. Pure pleasure!

Alberto Valenzuela, *Shreveport, Louisiana*

Of Apple Trees and Solar Panels

Four years ago we were the first in our neighborhood to install a large solar panel array on our roof. We wanted to participate in the budding rooftop revolution that is transforming the energy landscape of many countries around the world—it made both economical and ecological sense to us. Today four more homes in our neighborhood have installed their own solar panel arrays.

My smartphone app tells me that on a great day (with few clouds and little humidity) my panels produce more than 40 kilowatt-hours, providing enough electricity for

**CHRIST TRUMPS
MY SOLAR PANELS;
THE GOOD NEWS
OF SALVATION
WINS OVER MY
COMPOSTER.**

two single homes and offsetting 62 pounds (28 kilograms) of carbon emissions. If you like gadgets as I do, I enjoy letting the numbers soak in. My panels reliably produce about 9,000 kilowatt-hours every year, which means that our utility company has to write a check

to us at the end of each year. We still have to pay a general connection fee to maintain grid and infrastructure, but we have become net producers of energy. In the past four years we have offset about 50,000 pounds (22,679 kilograms) of carbon emissions, which represent planting the equivalent of about 550 trees. I call it the Klingbeil forest.

The county we live in also tells us to separate recyclable materials (plastic and paper) from regular trash—something I had been used to from my home country of Germany. My wife enjoys planting veggies in our garden, and we compost our fruit and vegetable peelings, giving us great fertile earth. Since we don't like too many chemicals in and around the house, we have so far refrained from fertilizing our lawn, instead opting to mulch—and live with some clover.

By now you may have gotten worried. Is he ready to join venerable Greenpeace or any other hip NGO focusing on saving the planet? Shouldn't he rather be focusing on saving the world and proclaiming God's end-time message?

Let me quiet your fears. I am not about to join a movement that, at times, is best described in Paul's penetrating words found in Romans 1:25: "They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator."

First things first. Christ trumps my solar panels; the good news of salvation wins over my composter. Yet the apparent conflict is artificial and lacks true understanding of what is meant when Genesis speaks of dominion and stewardship. This earth, blighted and disfigured by thousands of years of sin and misery and pain and abuse, is still God's creation entrusted to humanity. Our relationship to God's earth is reflective of our relationship to the earth's Creator.

Some may object strongly. They point to prophecy and postmodern agnostics to remind us that we should not be taken in by "the spirit of this age." They are, of course, right—and wrong. Spirit-guided stewardship distinguishes carefully between self-promoting activism that removes God from the picture, and God-centered creation care that engages people as they contemplate divine revelation in nature. With some hesitation, I'd like to side with a saying attributed (most likely posthumously) to German Reformer Martin Luther: "If I knew that tomorrow was the end of the world, I would plant an apple tree today." Even if it's not a Luther classic, I like its sentiments. While I eagerly await God's new creation and His return to Planet Earth, I am committed to taking care of God's marvelous creation.

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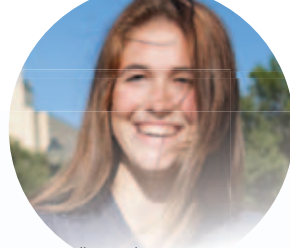
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