

**NOVEMBER 2022: BELIEVING THE UNBELIEVABLE +
THE HOLLYWOOD INFLUENCE + SEARCHING FOR
LIFE BEYOND OUR SYSTEM + THE GIFT OF GRACE +
I SAW GOD'S HAND**

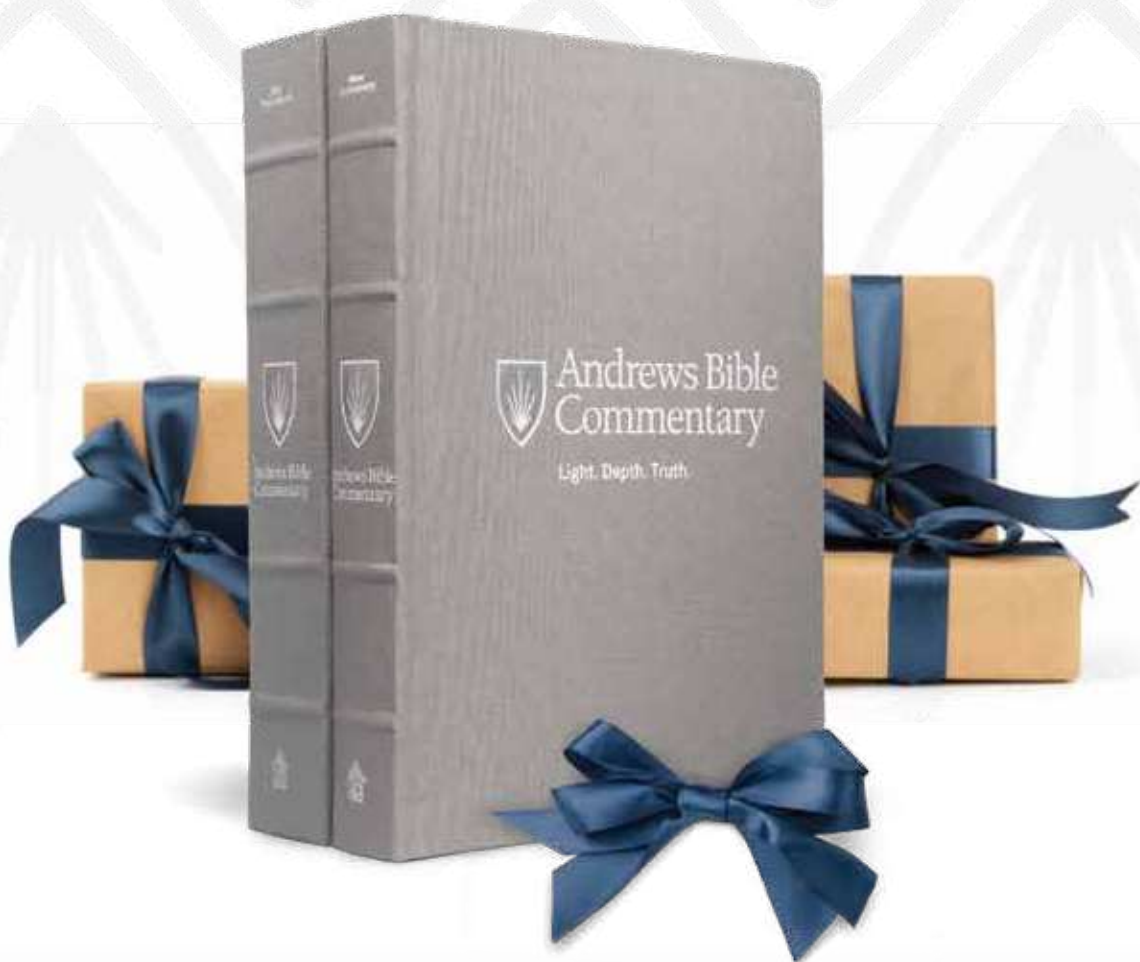
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TRENDING

THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:

1



Justin Kim Voted as Editor-Elect of Adventist Review Ministries

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Imagining Friendships: Adventists and Muslims, by Paul Dybdahl and Gabriela Phillips

3



Oakwood Adventist Academy Sabbath Accommodation Suit Settled

4



Is It Possible to Live With No Fear of Death? by David Neal

5



The Junk Collector, by Joseph Olstad

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BILL KNOTT



*When stadiums fall silent,
the snow will still be shoveled.*

The Hiddenness of Heroes

A stiff wind off Lake Erie drives sleet in his eyes as he squares up the next shovelful of snow on the church sidewalk. Eleven inches of the heavy, wet stuff is nothing to write home about, for all the homes within a hundred miles are blanketed this morning.

He murmurs a prayer of gratitude that the aging oil furnace in the basement sprang to life when he eased the thermostat to 72 before he began to shovel. The contract for annual inspection and upkeep lapsed in July, and the church board voted to save the \$748 for some unspecified reserve fund. Somehow, they told him glibly, he and the Lord would keep the furnace running one more winter.

Salt, he mutters as he scrapes the cracked cement with his shovel blade. *I need the safety salt*. Somewhere behind the glowing furnace a bag of safety salt he stowed there last November will keep the saints upright as they edge their way from the parking lot to the sanctuary door.

She has spent the week thinking of sackbuts, cornets and flutes. The three exuberant four-year olds who attend her weekly Sabbath School class will certainly want to reenact the Daniel 3 story of Meschach, Shadrach, and Abednego—and she must find an instrument for each.

Her grandmother's old zither, layered in the dust of decades, will do for a stringed instrument. A trumpet kazoo from the Dollar Store will answer for a cornet. But the only thing that even seems like a flute is an ivory-colored recorder still hiding in a bedroom closet from when Stephen was in elementary school. *Not perfect, but workable*, she tells herself, imagining how Elena, Carl, and Ezra will stand so straight and tall in front of the pastor's cardboard cutout of the image of Daniel 2. They will play in one beautiful cacophony the zither, the trumpet kazoo, and the recorder. And then they will stand—they will stand—unblinking and unbowed.

He lingers for an extra sixty seconds in the shower, imagining that this is how the Holy Spirit will fall on him as he preaches the morning message. It will be grace, and nothing more, that gets him through this sermon. Two funerals and three hospital visits devoured all his time this week, and Fiona has been sleeping poorly in the seventh month of pregnancy.

This is not the life he dreamed of while in seminary—a world of big ideas and wise sermons; guests striding through the church's front door; the baptistry filled once each month. Just now, all the baptism he craves is the warm oil of the Spirit, promised to believers under stress: "When they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers, and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you will answer or what you are to say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say" (Luke 12:11-12, NRSV).

These are the heroes of my church—unsung, unlauded, rarely celebrated. I think of them when television lights obscure the hundreds in the audience, when crowds mill through exhibit halls, when stadiums swell with "We Have This Hope."

The Lord who gave His rapt attention to one woman pouring out the fragrance of her heart cannot forget the thousands of deacons, teachers, and pastors who do His bidding in obscurity because they deeply love Him and His truth. When stadiums fall silent and the last bright light has winked off in the studio, the snow will still be shoveled; the children will still be taught; the sermons will still carry grace and power because the Spirit moves among us.

Seek out the heroes of your church. Give them your full attention and your love. Tell them what a gift they are to all of us who long for His appearing. ♣

A NOTE OF APPRECIATION

What a privilege it is for me to write and let you know how much I appreciate receiving the *Adventist Review*. It has helped me to understand the times and seasons we are living in. Each article stirs my heart to want more and more of God's Word in my life. I truly have been blessed and edified by reading the magazine. I appreciate the great work everyone is doing at *Adventist Review*. The message conveyed has been a great source of nourishment and energy for all readers. May God's grace abound more as you all keep making the magazine.

Kenneth Wells, Jr.
Maryland



SONG OF THE HIMALAYAS

I was delighted to see Gerald Klingbeil's book review of *Song of the Himalayas*, by Abigail Follows. This is the most inspiring book I've ever read. I have followed this gifted writer since before she went on her first Adventist Frontier Missions assignment. Abigail's recent *Review* article "The Son Shall Set

You Free (Even From Your Phone)" is much needed in our tech-addicted society.

LaRenne Lacey
Wenatchee, Washington

HOW WE VOTE

I want to thank the *Review* and commend Ms. Krause for the excellent article on voting. This piece is one of the very best I have ever read in our publica-

tions. With rare attention to detail and sophistication in the grasp of a very challenging topic, Ms. Krause has given great clarity to how this exercise of voting should be approached. First, we need to come from the depths of a truly identified place in Christ not allowing for political formations of our faith. Indeed, as stated, it is a "herculean effort" to overcome a submission to political identity over our position in Christ. Yet as citizens first of the kingdom of Christ, we are called to express ourselves in what we do, say, and vote as an extension of God's character and will.

Kevin James
Lawrenceville, Georgia

Editor's Note: "To Vote or Not to Vote" by Bettina Krause, originally appeared online as part of our premium content. If you missed reading it, you've been given a second opportunity. The article appears in this issue, beginning on p. 52.

ADRA

What a wonderful focus on ADRA (September 2022), with the added short piece asking readers to share their favorite charities. I

Yet as citizens first of the kingdom of Christ, we are called to express ourselves in what we do, say, and vote as an extension of God's character and will.

—KEVIN JAMES, LAWRENCEVILLE, GEORGIA

had no idea ADRA was involved in so many countries, was so well respected, and committed to the “longer view.” As a result, I have decided to give a small monthly contribution to ADRA, asking that it be used for one of the long-range sustainable projects. I wish that you had raised a warning about some charities that are masters of pulling at heartstrings and taking advantage of generosity while doing little of what they promise. Luckily, several websites do an excellent job of evaluating charities. Readers, please do your research before giving!

Bruce McClay, M.A., M.L.S.

Battle Ground, Washington

HURTING FAMILIES

Wow! The short article “Hurting Families” hit me in the heart and mind. So many parents wonder what to think when an adult child/child turns from what was shown at home, but Andy Nash has given us something to ponder. Thanks for encouraging us to be intentional with adult children/children around us and keeping Christ at the center (where He always belongs).

Mary Sailo

St. Joseph, Michigan

365 DAYS WITH JESUS

Just a word of appreciation for the “365 Days With Jesus” guide for reading through the four Gospels, along with *The Desire of Ages* and *Christ's Object Lessons*. My husband and I had been thinking of the new year and new beginnings when we saw this. It looked doable, so we started it. We have kept up with the readings and read ahead in anticipation of vacations, having house guests, etc. Both of us have enjoyed it and been blessed through it. We are so grateful. The assignments have been well thought out and “right-sized,” and our thanks go to Merle Poirier for the thought and work that went into this. Thank you to the editor and the entire staff.

Linda Currier

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

The August 2022 article by General Conference lawyer Jennifer Woods titled “The Christian's Call to Civil Disobedience” was informative and excellent as a preparation for the last days of earth's history. She referred to John Yoder, a Mennonite theologian and ethicist, who said, “The conscientious objector who refused to do what his government asks him to still remains under the sovereignty of the government and accepts the penalties which it imposes.” That same John Yoder also wrote, “Servanthood replaces dominion. Forgiveness absorbs hostility.” From *The Great Controversy*: “We should choose the right because it is right, and leave consequences with God.”

Richard Lane

Livonia, Michigan

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.

November 01, 2022

ADVENTIST REVIEW

Dear Friend and Supporter,

There are many things I love about this ministry. But the one that keeps the fire burning in my heart is the one I'm writing to you about today.

Our New Believers program from its inception has been to serve one purpose—inspire hope and faith in those newly joined to our global Adventist church family. There's something about reading about the lives and insights of believers around the world that makes all the difference when you're young in faith.

I'm humbled to have been involved in launching this crucial piece of our ministry many years ago, and I'd love your help to keep it moving forward today.

I'm writing to ask for your help to inspire a new faith generation that has just joined us. Thousands of New Believers have joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church across North America in the last 12 months, and they're looking to make sense of this new way of life they've embraced.

One of the ways we can help them is by sharing with them the same faith-building content that we've been offering for more than 173 years in the *Adventist Review*.

Today, the *Adventist Review* continues to expand in areas far beyond print. We now offer inspiring, practical content on **audio, video, virtual reality, and social media platforms**, and the list continues to grow.

Your continued support and kindness helps place this journal—with all of its supporting platforms—in the homes of thousands of new followers of Jesus. That's just one of the things that keeps me excited about this ministry!

For 24 years, faithful *Adventist Review* supporters like you have sponsored tens of thousands of subscriptions for these New Believers every year, helping them in that important first year as an Adventist with faith-building, high-quality articles, devotional materials, and news—on the platform of their choice. Your help in sponsoring a New Believer subscription is pivotal to anchoring them into this movement in the coming year.

Here's how you can join me in making such a difference in thousands of lives:

For only \$10, you can guarantee that a newly baptized Adventist gets a full year's subscription—12 beautiful editions—of the print magazine, with all of its eye-catching, relevant news, doctrine, and inspiration, as well as full access to our digital subscription included with their subscription. In addition to our text-based content, we're also including new audio and video content for our New Believers.

Thank you for caring. Thank you for praying. Thank you for keeping the witness going to a new generation of believers.

Share the grace that has been extended to you.



Bill Knott
Executive Editor

P.S. Make your gift online by credit card at the *Adventist Review* website (www.adventistreview.org), or send your check to: *Adventist Review*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, Maryland, USA. 20904

“The Seventh-day Adventist Church was not called to be a parking lot, but a launchpad for missionaries.” Erton Köhler p. 11

NEWS



General Conference president Ted N. C. Wilson introduces the Annual Council report on the latest leadership training initiatives on October 7. PHOTO: ENNO MÜLLER, ADVENTIST REVIEW

CHURCH EXPERTS REPORT ON LEADERSHIP TRAINING INITIATIVES

THE GLOBAL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE AIMS TO CHANGE LEADERS FOR THE BETTER.

MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

More than 340 members of the General Conference Executive Committee (GC-EXCOM) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church gathered October 7 for the second and last day of the Leadership, Education, and Development (LEAD) Conference, held at the church's headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. A significant part of the morning training was dedicated to discussing the joys and challenges of church leadership, and exploring what the Adventist Church is doing to train current leaders, new appointees, and plan for the training of future leaders.

“There is no issue in our church

that is more important than leadership,” Andrews University provost Christon Arthur said. “There’s none.”

Along with an awareness of the importance of leadership, it is vital that leaders be given opportunities to learn the tools of the trade, Inter-European Division (EUD) executive secretary Barna Magyarosi said. “We need to provide leadership development for leaders that have been appointed to significant positions of leadership, and they are usually left alone to swim as they can,” he said.

Andrews University president Andrea Luxton concurred. “You can [have] someone who is extremely

smart and bright, who is very committed to God, but if they don’t have that capacity of being resilient when challenges come along, it can break them,” she said.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH DOING?

GC leaders have embarked on a deliberate plan to serve leaders better. It’s what they call the General Conference Leadership Development Program, and it includes a Leadership Advisory Council. It also involves an Andrews University liaison committee, as the centenarian institution will be directly involved with training Adventist leaders.

Global Leadership Institute associate director Randy J. Siebold (left) and director Erich Baumgartner shared the results of two pilot leadership programs. PHOTO: ENNO MÜLLER, ADVENTIST REVIEW



“There has to be intentionality, as we invest in growing leaders for mission,” GC treasurer Paul Douglas said. “The outcome expected [is] that our leaders will have a greater connection to their God, but also their competencies needed to do that work to which God has called them,” he said.

As part of the program, leaders will conduct online Global Leadership Conferences for newly elected leaders every March. “Also, every September there will be [a] Global Leadership Conference for current leaders, to study current issues, and we hope it will be a blessing to all of us,” GC vice president Artur Stele said.

THE GLOBAL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Church officers said they will collaborate with Andrews University to provide a LEADLab, through the Global Leadership Institute (GLI). GLI director Erich Baumgartner and GLI associate director Randy J. Siebold shared with the GC-EXCOM members the results of two pilot leadership programs that have taken place recently.

Baumgartner explained that it is difficult to lead, but that rapid changes in our world make leadership even more challenging. “We live today not only in a different world [than in the past], but the world we live in is constantly and effectively changing. And it has affected us and the work we do as leaders.”

Thus, the rationale of the pro-

gram, Baumgartner said, is the acknowledgment that leaders must prepare themselves to be effective leaders in a more comprehensive way. “This is what all this initiative is about.”

ITS ORIGINS AND SCOPE

The idea for a Global Leadership Institute began in 2019, Baumgartner said, with the GC providing some seed funding for it. Later, organizers decided to pattern their institute after the Mission Institute, which trains missionaries for the mission field overseas.

In February 2020, leaders participated in conversations about the initiative during meetings in Cape Town, South Africa. But then the pandemic began, which put many of those plans on hold. It also forced leaders to adapt to a new reality and be open to the possibility of conducting the leadership training online.

Seibold explained some of the things they learned along the way. “We decided that the first thing we needed to do was to help leaders to understand themselves,” he said. “And that core idea happens when you better understand God. In the context of a knowledge of God there is a clarity about who you are as a person.”

The second point, Seibold shared, is helping leaders to lead with others. “It’s not leading others in the sense of being dictatorial, but really trying to find the place where we can grow and help others to grow.”

Seibold added that from the sec-

ond stage, they moved to leading in organizations. “You may have not a top leadership position, but position does not always determine who’s leading.”

Finally, a core piece of leadership is about the process of growing, Seibold said. “It’s not just becoming a leader but continuing to become more and more the leader [God] intended you to be. Growing for mission [is] the ultimate achievement of leadership,” he said.

PARTICIPANTS’ FEEDBACK

During the last part of the presentation, GLI leaders shared a video with some feedback from those who have participated in the pilot programs.

“With all of my training that I had had in the past 20 years, I had never experienced something that went so deep,” South Pacific Division (SPD) social innovator and entrepreneur Camila Skaf said.

“My personal growth has been tremendous,” Cosmin Dan-Marica, who serves as a church pastor and chief financial officer in the Tasmanian Conference in Australia, said. “It’s been revolutionary; it’s been transformative.”

In his closing remarks, GC president Ted N. C. Wilson thanked all those who have been working to put this leadership program together. “It has taken considerable time and effort. But we praise the Lord that things have now coalesced,” he said. “I want to encourage each one of us to grow leaders for mission.”



General Conference secretary Erton Köhler speaks to delegates to the 2022 Annual Council on October 9.

ENNO MÜLLER, ADVENTIST REVIEW

SECRETARY'S REPORT UNROLLS NEW CRITERIA FOR MISSION SPENDING

REVAMPED MODEL WILL HELP LEADERS PRIORITIZE FRONTLINE SERVICE, ERTON KÖHLER SAYS.

MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

The General Conference (GC) Secretary's Report at the 2022 Annual Council called on leaders to support a plan to refocus the Seventh-day Adventist Church's priorities for missions worldwide. Members of the Secretariat team presented key parts of the report on October 9 at the church's headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. Presentations covered the past—the historic mission tradition of the Adventist Church; the present—what current statistics indicate; and an emphasis on the future—how a suggested new model of using more resources for mission would work.

"The Seventh-day Adventist Church was not called to be a parking lot but a launching pad," GC executive secretary Erton Köhler said. "We need to move forward in faith."

Köhler reminded the more than 340 delegates attending Annual Council that the Adventist Church has been called to a global mission. In 1900, 83 percent of Adventist members lived in North America, he shared. In 2022, that figure has declined to 6 percent. "We are a

global church with a global mission," Köhler said. "We cannot focus only on our local needs; we need to look at our global challenges to finally preach the gospel of the kingdom to all the world." And he added, "At Secretariat, we are working focused on that commitment."

LONGSTANDING FOCUS ON THE MISSION FIELD

Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research (ASTR) director David Trim shared how in 1903 the Adventist Church "underwent a dramatic reorganization to ensure that the [church] could reach out to all the world."

The focus of General Conference leaders at that time was on "unentered territories and unreached people." It is what they called "the mission field," which was vast, Trim said, because it included "all areas outside the homelands" of North America, Central and Western Europe, and Australasia. "These home fields were expected to take the message to the mission field," he said.

Trim underlined the current need

to send missionaries to frontline mission work more than to administrative positions. That need has moved Adventist leaders serving in the GC Secretariat to suggest a mission refocus model, he said.

REFOCUSING ON MISSION

The slow drift from focusing on frontline missionaries to other areas of service has motivated leaders to devise a plan to refocus on the mission of the church, GC associate secretary Karen J. Porter explained as she introduced her report. "The challenge now is . . . how to use our mission resources by identifying mission-critical people groups and locations that have not yet been reached with the gospel," she said.

Porter explained that international service employees (ISEs)—missionaries sent by the church to serve in other regions of the world church—are serving in various capacities around the globe. Those serving in administrative positions, however, currently represent 35 percent of the total. Others serve the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) or in education, medical institutions, or auditing services. "While these categories of assignments are good, we must put more emphasis on reaching the unreached," Porter said.

Karen J. Porter, General Conference associate secretary, told delegates that “we must put more emphasis on reaching the unreached.” PHOTO: ENNO MÜLLER, ADVENTIST REVIEW



NEW MISSION PRIORITIES

In April 2022, the GC Mission Board voted on new priorities for sending missionaries, in what Porter defined as its “new mandate.” Priorities include direct-contact mission to create new worshipping groups, urban areas of more than 1 million population, and 10/40 window countries and people groups of non-Christian religions. (The 10/40 window is a region of the world where a majority of the world’s population lives but where Christians are in the minority.)

Porter also prioritized postmodern and post-Christian regions, low Adventist-to-population ratio sectors, and high-impact equipping for direct-contact mission.

The goal is to have 35 percent of the mission and international employees’ budgets meet the criteria by 2027 and 70 percent by 2032, she reported. “We realize this is a very ambitious goal,” Porter said, “but we also realize that with all of us working together in unity, we can effect this change.” She explained, “We are not saying that the positions that do not meet the criteria are not important or are not needed: we are only saying that these criteria are our priority today.”

A NEW ASSESSMENT SCALE

It’s all about acknowledging that the Adventist Church can improve the way it uses resources for mission, Porter said. But at the same time, the shift will be accomplished carefully and methodically, not randomly. For instance, GC Secre-

tariat has created a scale to evaluate primary budgets by asking seven key strategic questions that reflect the priorities voted by the Mission Board. Porter explained that each question had been assigned a range of points, and each budget was analyzed based on how closely the position focused on the priorities. “Three hundred and twenty-seven individual budgets have been put through this matrix,” Porter reported.

The questions include: How focused is the position on direct-contact mission with the goal of creating new worshipping groups? And, How focused is the position on training local people for direct-contact mission?

Porter reported that among the budgets the Secretariat team analyzed, only one reached the ideal 31 points. The funding in question has been assigned to a church planter who serves in a 10/40 window country, in a city of more than 1 million, and in direct-contact ministry. Those resources are also used at a local level (non-administrative), and the ratio of Adventists to the population is high (i.e., few members, as compared to the overall population).

HOW TO MOVE FORWARD

Porter reported that next, the Mission Board is planning to re-

view the budgets of international missionaries with divisions and institutions, and that divisions and institutions will work on a plan to reassign budgets to mission priority areas. The Mission Board will also determine the mission-matrix threshold (i.e., the minimum number of points required in each specific case). “It will be somewhere between 15 and 20 [out of 31] points,” Porter said.

She also shared that some projects already meet the new criteria, such as Mission Unusual Tokyo, Hope for Kolkata, and a special project in an unidentified country that restricts mission activity. She encouraged leaders to use Adventist Mission data to identify strategic mission opportunities. Those data can inform Global Mission leaders and other decision-makers to align their projects with these new criteria, she said. “As we refocus our mission resources, I challenge you to think about what sacrifices you are willing to make so that those who haven’t heard about Jesus . . . can also hear this message,” Porter said.

Köhler summed up the component pieces reported by the Secretariat team. “Our main challenge is to keep focused on what our real priority is,” he said. “It’s time to work together . . . to refocus our mission.”

JUSTIN KIM VOTED AS EDITOR-ELECT OF ADVENTIST REVIEW MINISTRIES

HE WILL REPLACE CURRENT EDITOR BILL KNOTT ON JANUARY 1, 2023.

MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

Members of the General Conference Executive Committee (GC-EXCOM) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church voted to accept the Nominating Committee recommendation to elect Justin Kim as the new editor-elect of Adventist Review Ministries (ARMies). The vote took place October 9, at the denomination's headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, where more than 340 people gathered for the 2022 Annual Council business sessions.

Kim is expected to become editor January 1, 2023, when current executive editor Bill Knott leaves the position after 16 years. GC-EXCOM members also voted Knott as the new associate director of the GC Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL) Department, replacing Jennifer Woods. In his new role, Knott will be the General Conference liaison to the U.S. Congress, the White House, and the diplomatic corps.

"I am humbled by this appointment," Kim said. "This ministry was birthed in serving God's people with inspiration, insight, and information. By God's grace, I hope to be faithful to this sacred trust in continuing the fidelity that has been manifested by the long lineage of the *Review's* editors."

"I am standing here to offer my support to Justin Kim as the editor of *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World*," Knott said to the delegates

before the vote was taken. "I have been privileged to know Justin as a friend, and later, as a colleague, for more than 15 years, and I have every confidence in his ability to lead this ministry and this team in the important work it is doing for the world church."

A YOUNG EXPERIENCED LEADER

Justin Kim was born in Queens, New York, United States, in 1980. He has a master's degree in pastoral ministry from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, and an undergraduate degree in biology and sociology from Brandeis University.

An ordained pastor since 2011, Kim served as a youth and local church pastor in the Michigan Conference. In the same church region, he also served as director of Public Campus Ministries and director of Communication, Sabbath School, and Men's Ministries.

In 2016 Kim was called to serve as assistant director of the GC Department of Sabbath School and Personal Ministries. In that capacity, he was a cofounder and then editor of the *inVerse Bible Study Guide*, the new Sabbath School lessons for young adults.

In June 2022 Kim was elected as associate director of the same GC department.



Justin Kim, editor-elect of Adventist Review Ministries.

PHOTO: DAVID B. SHERWIN

Kim has been involved in various service, editorial, and evangelistic endeavors since he was in college. In 2002 he was one of the cofounders of Generation. Youth. Christ. (GYC), a movement of young people that aims to mobilize existing youth and young adult ministries that are fully committed to the distinctive message and mission of the Adventist Church. A sought-after speaker, Kim has been a keynote speaker on several continents for evangelistic, youth, and workers' training events.

Kim is married to Rachel Jihyun, and they are proud parents of Noah (8) and Nathaniel (5).

OLDER THAN THE ADVENTIST ORGANIZATION

ARMies is the departmental ministry of the *Adventist Review* magazine, which began publishing in 1849. The magazine was established prior to the organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1863.

What is now *Adventist Review* was the result of the direct vision that Adventist Church cofounder Ellen G. White had in Dorchester, Massachusetts, in November 1848. The vision not only launched the magazine *Present Truth* (now *Adventist Review*) a year later, but also was the starting point of the Adventist publishing ministries around the world. ▀



General Conference treasurer Paul H. Douglas presents his report to the 2022 Annual Council in Silver Spring, Maryland, on October 10. PHOTO: ENNO

MÜLLER, ADVENTIST REVIEW

TREASURER'S REPORT UNVEILS MAJOR SHIFT IN USE OF FUNDS

MORE FUNDING SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO FRONTLINE MISSION INITIATIVES, HE SAID.

MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

Seventh-day Adventist leaders hope that a major shift in the use of funds will contribute to less spending on administrative positions and more on targeted frontline missionary activities around the world. It was a focus General Conference treasurer Paul H. Douglas emphasized several times during his report to members of the GC Executive Committee (GC-EXCOM) October 10. Douglas' presentation, titled "Investing in Mission," highlighted the Treasury Department's financial report during the 2022 Annual Council in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

"There is an old adage that says, 'Put your money where your mouth is,'" Douglas told the delegates. "I would like to translate that adage to us today by saying, 'We need to put our money where the mission is.'"

FROM MISSION STRATEGY TO OUTCOMES

Douglas defined three elements that inform the church's mission

strategy. He said they are intelligence, integration, and investment.

"Intelligence is knowing where to go, where those who are still unreached are, and where the opportunities are so we can broadcast them and find the people who can fit these opportunities," he said.

The church also needs integration, because everyone needs to be working together with just one cause, just one purpose, Douglas said. "We also need investment of our financial and human resources to be aligned intentionally to the mission strategy," he said.

Douglas explained that the mission strategy of the church should have an expected outcome. "We need to reflect whether we had or not the right intelligence. Do we have the right balance of integration? Do we have the right balance of investment to ensure that there is an effective outcome in our strategy?" he asked.

HIGHLIGHTING MISSION

Douglas shared five elements that can inform this shift toward dedicating more funds to frontline mission.

First, he said, it is important to prepare financial reporting to highlight mission. The current financial reporting usually highlights appropriations, funding for international employees (missionaries), the GC Auditing Services (GCAS), and GC administered and office operations, Douglas explained.

"To the untrained eye, none of that tells you anything. It tells you who got what, but it doesn't tell us what we did," he said.

Douglas revealed that starting in January 2023 the new financial reporting will focus more on mission strategy and support, educational institutions, and media and publications. Besides regular office operations, it will also seek to zero in on leadership development and accountability. "We need financial reporting that focuses us on mission," he said.

INCREASING SELF-SUPPORT

Another key element is to promote higher levels of self-support for organizations. "We need to be more targeted, more strategic, in our use of appropriations," Douglas said, while explaining that there are some tough questions leaders need to ask themselves. "Are we supporting the administration of a division, or are we supporting the mission activities in the territory?"

“The key question we need to ask ourselves is ‘How do we move our resources from the machinery to the mission?’”

he asked. “We will need to adjust how we look at appropriations and shift to support the strategic decisions related to the use of our resources.”

Douglas said leaders believe that promoting higher levels of self-support will enable a greater focus on mission, because entities will be able to live within their means, and the resources they receive can be focused on a particular area.

MISSION, NOT MACHINERY

The key, Douglas said, is to learn ways of positioning resources toward mission and not machinery or administrative expenses. Douglas noted that most of the funds are spent on administration professionals—“in the machinery, not the mission.”

He explained that an analysis of the current use of budgets for mission shows that out of 31 possible points, the average score worldwide is 8.1, something that highlights the church’s mission drift and the need to refocus mission resources.

“We need to move from 8.1 points to 31,” he said.

If leaders want to increase the allocation of funds to mission, it is essential to change the criteria used. Among other things, Douglas reaffirmed the mission refocus criteria adopted by the church for implementing direct contact mission with the goal of creating new worshipping groups. Leaders will also focus on 10/40 window countries, people groups of non-Christian religions, and urban areas

with populations above one million people. He also highlighted postmodern and post-Christian countries or regions; low Adventist-to-population ratios in countries, regions, or people groups; and high-impact equipping for direct contact mission. “The key question we need to ask ourselves is ‘How do we move our resources from the machinery to the mission?’” he said.

MISSION OPPORTUNITIES ARE KEY

The treasurer urged that it is essential to provide information about mission opportunities. He called leaders to identify, broadcast, count the cost, and allow people to own these opportunities. “But how can they own these opportunities if they have no information?” Douglas asked.

He explained that in the 1930s, at the height of mission giving, 60 cents of every dollar was allocated for world missions. Today that number is 3.5 cents. “Just imagine what we could have done if we had sustained that level of giving!” Douglas said.

A RENEWED EMPHASIS ON FRONTLINE MISSION

As a last element, Douglas shared how in 2021 the GC received a large contribution from a member’s estate. “When we received these funds, we could have easily taken it to try [to] balance the budget,” he said. “But the General Conference administration

decided . . . to assign and make these funds available for local churches to get involved in ‘I Will Go’ initiatives.”

So far, 19 projects have been approved for 2023 in the amount of US\$1,642,940. They include inviting a neighborhood in Denver, Colorado, to a block party with blood pressure, cooking, farmer’s market, mental health, and dental services; developing a welcome center, social, and evangelism place in Geneva, Switzerland; and building a youth center in Lomé, Togo. The funds will be also used for a potato-growing ministry for a food pantry, public school meals, and education in Moab, Utah; providing Bibles to two tribes in Harer, Ethiopia; and building a day-care-and-play center to adequately prepare children ages 2-5 for primary school in Musuing, Zimbabwe.

Douglas quoted Ellen G. White, who, in the May 5, 1904, issue of the *Review and Herald* (now the *Adventist Review*), wrote, “Our church members should feel a deep interest in home and foreign missions. Great blessing will come to them as they make self-sacrificing efforts to plant the standard of truth in new territory. The money invested in this work will bring rich returns.”

Douglas concluded that he couldn’t agree more. Referencing Matthew 24:14, he said, “When we marshal all of our financial and human resources to preach the gospel, the end will come.”



G. Alexander Bryant, North American Division president and Impact Columbus evangelist/featured speaker. PHOTO: PIETER DAMSTEEGT/NAD

IMPACT COLUMBUS REACHES LOCAL COMMUNITY FOR CHRIST

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION PRESIDENT WAS THE FEATURED SPEAKER.

BENIA JENNINGS, FOR NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

In the summer of 2022 central Ohio churches of the Allegheny West Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (AWC) in the United States challenged their congregations to a public evangelism effort. Churches invited members from their local communities to participate in a citywide Bible study. Congregations united to host a series of giveaways and community events at multiple locations.

This outreach led to the start of the Impact Columbus—Sharing Hope revival, a 21-day evangelistic series from August 20 to September 10, 2022. The meetings were hosted by the AWC and featured speaker and evangelist G. Alexander Bryant, president of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists (NAD). The nightly meetings, held at the tented Grand Pavilion of the Crown Plaza Columbus North Hotel in Worthington, Ohio, culminated in a corporate baptism in the hotel's outdoor pool. Seventy new members were welcomed into the church.

Initially scheduled for 2020, Impact Columbus plans were sidelined because of lockdowns asso-

ciated with the COVID-19 pandemic. "We enthusiastically accepted the opportunity when we were given a chance to do Impact Columbus again in 2022," AWC executive vice president Joel Johnson said. "Our concentration was a citywide event, however, the most important thing to realize is that evangelism is not an event but a way of life."

Johnson explained that the AWC wanted to reach the city of Columbus, aiming to use methods that did not exclude some of the very people they wanted to reach. "We had to find nonconventional ways of connecting with people to enroll them in Bible studies. We decided to schedule a series of 'felt needs' outreach events," he said.

The churches hosted a merchandise giveaway and distributed items that people needed; they gave away bicycles and organized two food giveaways where they were able to interact with people, leaders said.

WELCOME TO THE FAMILY

As new members are welcomed into the church family, Bryant counseled churches to give them the

support and space to grow in their new journey.

"The first thing we need to remember is that they are new; they are babes in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. [The] journey is a new one and a complete lifestyle change," he said. "We need to be there to help nurture them and give them space to grow."

In his closing remarks to the Impact Columbus team, Bryant underscored the tremendous effort made by the AWC administrators, pastors, and members. "The coming together of multiple churches for an evangelism effort is a very exciting opportunity to try to reach people and to have a collaborative approach that we don't often get a chance to do. I appreciate the efforts that they put forward, and I believe that the Lord is going to bless as a result," he said.

After the series, AWC president Marvin C. Brown said he hopes churches continue the outreach and evangelism trend. "Going forward, the most important aspect of evangelism begins now with discipleship. Receiving new babes is easy. Our challenge now is to create an irresistible environment for our new believers to be loved, nurtured, affirmed, cared for, and fed a wholistic diet and approach to the Word of God," he said. ▀



ADVENTIST POLISH AND UKRAINIAN REFUGEES MEET FOR SUMMER

CAMP. Ukrainian and Polish Pathfinder leaders worked in collaboration to organize a summer camp with Adventist members from both countries. With open hearts Polish Pathfinders opened up the camp to their new Ukrainian friends now living in Poland. Located in the picturesque region of Mazury, Poland, at the Waszeta Recreation Centre near the city of Olsztynek, the camp welcomed 200 teenagers and their instructors.



ADVENTHEALTH AND NORTH AMERICAN CHURCH LEADERS MEET FOR

MISSION. Leaders from the North American Division (NAD) and AdventHealth recently met in Orlando, Florida, for a day of vision sharing, design thinking, and collaborative planning for the future. "Our theme for this visit is 'Together in Mission,' and the three strategic focus areas are multiplying the ministry of Jesus, effectively using media, and mentorship of the next generation of leaders for the church. We really appreciate AdventHealth and the work they do, and the ministry they do for Christ," G. Alexander Bryant, NAD president, said.



PHILIPPINES EVENT HIGHLIGHTS KEY ROLE OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION.

The education department of the Adventist church in the Central Visayan Conference (CVC) of the Philippines called for a two-day meeting at Cebu Adventist Academy in Talisay City, Cebu, on September 16-17. The event's goal was to reexamine, reorient, empower, and encourage church education secretaries and school board members on Adventist education's role in students' development. More than 300 registered delegates from different church schools throughout Central Visayas responded and attended the first-ever CVC-wide Church Education Secretary and School Board Convention.



EVENT CONNECTS ADVENTIST GERMAN-SPEAKING WOMEN FROM THREE

COUNTRIES. From September 22 to 25, more than 200 women attended a Women's Ministries (WM) congress in Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany, organized for participants from Austria, Switzerland, and Germany. Elida Oncea, WM director for the Austrian Union, and Chidi Ngwaba, from London, United Kingdom, were the main presenters. The event focused on lessons from the life of Queen Esther, picking up her decision to save her people in the words of the congress motto: "And NOW I will go."



LEADERS TRAIN YOUNG ADULTS TO BECOME DIGITAL EVANGELISTS.

The Adventist Church in Chiapas, Mexico, provides opportunities for young people across the region to become digital evangelists. During a recent communication training, more than 800 young adults from hundreds of local churches gathered to create or optimize their digital ministries on social media platforms. The seven-day training saw hundreds gather at five different locations throughout Chiapas, August 21-27, to learn how to be creative disciples when producing short films, taking photographs, writing news stories, and more.



IN JAMAICA, MASTER GUIDES RALLY TO BE "IGNITED FOR MISSION."

As the Adventist Church celebrates the centennial year of the Master Guide ministry, more than 500 Master Guides in Jamaica gathered for a special rally at the Northern Caribbean University gymnasium on August 27. The youth leaders drawn from across the five conferences that comprise the Jamaica Union gathered under the theme "Ignited for Mission: I Will Go." The purpose of the event was to motivate Master Guides to serve confidently in their churches, clubs, and communities.



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Catch a Glimpse of

RONNY NALIN

If you are like me, you are eagerly checking the news each week to see what kind of new wondrous images or research results are being released by astronomers and astrophysicists working on data collected by the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST). What is the reason for this thrilling anticipation? Why are our minds so fascinated with learning more about the vast universe we are part of?

I believe that God has placed in our hearts an intrinsic desire for contemplation of what is at the limit of our knowledge (cf. Eccl. 3:11). However, we are also in awe because the JWST images reveal pristine realms, untouched and far removed from the worldly affairs of human dominions. They convey a sense of the overwhelming immensity of the universe and of the grandeur of its Creator, a God who is truly worthy of our worship. Finally, we are also interested in framing this wealth of new data within our biblical understanding of origins and creation.

In this issue of the *Adventist Review* several Seventh-day Adventist scientists share their thoughts on subjects at the interface of faith and science, related to the discoveries made through the James Webb Space Telescope. Their articles acknowledge the limitations of human understanding while relying on the trustworthiness of God's Word. Together they aim to provide a starting platform for further reflection with an approach that is: (1) *educational*, seeking to familiarize readers with the basics of the most important objects of study and open questions being explored in this astrophysical pursuit; (2) *expository*, offering an overview of the standard cosmological model, its philosophical and theological implications, and ways that have been suggested to interface it with the biblical text; and (3) *devotional*, conveying the wonder and satisfaction derived from the God-given gift of being able to study and explore the cosmos.

Together with my colleagues at the Geoscience Research Institute (GRI) and the editors of *Adventist Review*, we hope that these articles may bring you closer to the One in whom "all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible" (Col. 1:16, NIV).

Ronny Nalin, Ph.D., serves as director of the Geoscience Research Institute and lives in southern California.

God's Handiwork



Believing the

A universe of miracles

ANTHONY BOSMAN

If you have struggled to believe in the miraculous, you are not alone. Even the great heroes of faith wrestled with unbelief. Abraham was sensible enough to realize his barren wife would not produce offspring and questioned God's promise to make a great nation out of him. Rather than rebuke Abraham's doubt, God instructed him: "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them" (Gen. 15:5).¹

To the naked eye, several thousand stars are visible. If you have been privileged enough to escape the light pollution of the city and see the sky on a clear night, you know how breathtaking it can be. Yet the incredible images of the James Webb Space Telescope remind us that what we see with our naked eye is only the smallest glimpse of the richness of the cosmos. For instance, the first publicly released image of Webb, SMACS 0723, surveys a portion of sky that is about the size of a grain of sand held at arm's length.² When Webb peered into that tiny dark region, it revealed the light of thousands of galaxies, each containing billions of stars. I like to imagine that when God commanded Abraham to number the stars, He took him on a similar visionary experience throughout the cosmos.

Our best estimate is that there are around 200 billion trillion stars in the visible universe, though this is likely to increase. There are far too many stars for anyone to count, but that was the point of God's exercise: Abraham needed to be reminded of God's infinite creative power. As he looked to the heavens and tried to number the innumerable, Abraham's objections subsided, and "he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness" (verse 6). Perhaps it is providential that at a time when it's easy to doubt, we have been gifted images of the heavens through the Webb telescope to help us believe again.

HOW DID WE GET SO SKEPTICAL?

Our modern skepticism can be traced to the Enlightenment philosopher David Hume. Hume argued that "a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature," but as "firm and unalterable experience has established these laws" we should reject the miraculous.³ But this argument is circular, for it rules out miracles by *defining* them to be violations that cannot be violated, failing to account for the possibility that God can act in the world contrary to our ordinary experience. Indeed, in his two-volume work on miracles, Craig Keener documents the long history of well-attested miracles throughout the world.⁴

Nevertheless, Hume's skepticism was widely embraced. It fits with the popular myth that now that we are scientific, we know better than the ancients who superstitiously believed barren women could conceive and dead men rise from the dead. But of course, the ancients well knew old women did not become pregnant and dead men rotted away, which is why they made such a big deal when something so out of the ordinary occurred.

Many scientists have recognized that the existence of the laws of nature is itself miraculous. In his essay "The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics in the Natural Sciences," the mathematical physicist and Nobel laureate Eugene Wigner observed: "It is not at all natural that 'laws of nature' exist, much less that man is able to discover them."⁵ Wigner uses the word "miracle" to characterize the ability of mathematics to describe the natural world. The history of science testifies to the fact that people were bold enough to look for the laws of nature precisely because they believed in a divine lawgiver. Neither under polytheism, where the cosmos is ruled by many competing gods, nor atheism, which denies any Intelligence behind the universe, would one expect to be able to discover universal mathematics laws.

Unbelievable



Just as ordinary physics breaks down at singularities such as black holes and the first moments of the universe, we should not be surprised that God's mighty acts are beyond our explanatory power.

A GOD WHO CREATES

Isaac Newton's theory of universal gravitation, for example, naturally arose from his belief in a God who created the heavens and the earth. And rather than think that it explained away God, Newton saw it as evidencing "an intelligent and powerful Being"⁶ who created and actively sustains the universe, believing that behind the force of gravity was "an agent acting constantly according to certain laws."⁷ Newton's view is well reflected in Ellen White's description of God's relationship to the laws of nature: "God does not annul His laws, but He is continually working through them, using them as His instruments. They are not self-working. God is perpetually at work in nature. She is His servant, directed as He pleases. Nature in her work testifies to the intelligent presence and active agency of a being who moves in all His works according to His will. . . . The hand of infinite power is perpetually at work guiding this planet."⁸

Granted, Newton's understanding of gravity was incomplete, and we continue to develop richer accounts—from Einstein's vision of mass warping spacetime to hypothesized graviton particles that are conjectured to mediate the gravitational force. Yet as science advances, God's power is not diminished. Every such theory is, after all, a mathematical model describing how the universe behaves, for equations have no creative or sustaining power. God alone governs the cosmos; "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

As such, the Bible does not treat natural explanation and divine intervention as mutually exclusive. Rather, it often blends these two kinds of explanations, portraying God as sovereign over nature and free to use His laws to accomplish His purposes. During the plagues of Egypt, Scripture records that God brought locusts by a wind from the east, and when God relented, they were dispelled by a strong wind from the west. And when Israel was trapped by the Red Sea, "the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land" (Ex. 14:21). The strong wind explains Israel's deliverance on one level, and God's activity explains it on another.

Thus we should not think that just because someone has offered a natural explanation of something it rules out God's hand in it. Nor is God constrained by what we deem the laws of nature.

Ellen White forcefully made this point when she observed, "As commonly used, the term 'laws of nature' comprises what men have been able to discover with regard to the laws that govern the physical world; but how limited is their knowledge, and how vast the field in which the Creator can work in harmony with His own laws and yet wholly beyond the comprehension of finite beings!"⁹

Events such as creation, the Incarnation, and resurrection are all singular occurrences that are exceptional to God's typical governing of the world. Just as ordinary physics breaks down at singularities such as black holes and the first moments of the universe, we should not be surprised that God's mighty acts are beyond our explanatory power. As Blaise Pascal reminds us: "The last proceeding of reason is to recognize that there is an infinity of things which are beyond it. It is but feeble if it does not see so far as to know this. But if natural things are beyond it, what will be said of supernatural?"¹⁰

If there is one lesson we should take away from the stunning images of the James Webb Space Telescope, it is that the universe is a much bigger, grander, and more miraculous place than we often imagine. This ought to teach us that just because something is incomprehensible to us does not mean that it is impossible for God. Rather, as we struggle to comprehend the incomprehensible, might we learn once more to believe that which we had mistaken as unbelievable. ▀

¹ Bible texts are from the English Standard Version.

² <https://www.nasa.gov/image-feature/goddard/2022/nasa-s-webb-delivers-deepest-infrared-image-of-universe-yet>

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⁸ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 8, pp. 259, 260.

⁹ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890, 1908), p. 114.

¹⁰ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, p. 267.

Anthony Bosman, Ph.D., serves as an assistant professor of mathematics at Andrews University, in Berrien Springs, Michigan. His research focuses on knot theory and its connections with three- and four-dimensional manifolds.

The Big Bang, Standard Cosmological Model, and the Bible

ALEKSEI POPOV

The Scriptures state that observing the universe can give us important information about its Creator. The psalmist writes, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard” (Ps. 19:1-3, KJV).

With the launch of the James Webb Space Telescope, questions have piqued regarding the origins of the universe. Do modern theories provide adequate answers? How do they relate to the biblical picture of the origin of our world?

A STATIC UNIVERSE?

From the time of ancient Greek philosophers until the beginning of the twentieth century, the universe was considered static, unchangeable on a large scale. By materialistic theories it is also eternally existing, having neither beginning nor end. The theory of relativity¹ called this hypothesis into question.

In this theory, the universe, depending on its average density, should either expand or contract. It cannot be static, as was shown by Russian physicist and mathematician Alexander Friedmann.² The same conclusions were reached by Belgian mathematician and Catholic priest Georges Lemaitre, who developed the theory of the expanding universe.³

The next important step in the question of universe stability was the discovery of the so-called redshift in the spectra of distant galaxies. The magnitude of the redshift is directly related to the distance to the galaxy: the farther the galaxy is,

the greater its redshift and, accordingly, the faster the galaxy is moving away from us. This was called Hubble’s law and fit very well into Friedmann and Lemaitre’s theories.⁴ These observations confirmed the assumptions that the universe is not static, putting to an end the centuries-old belief about the stability of the cosmos.

UNRESOLVED QUESTIONS

But here a logical question arises: if the universe is really expanding, then there was a “moment zero” in the past, from which this expansion began. At that moment all the matter of the universe had to be compressed into a point with infinite density (in astrophysics, this is called “singularity”).

Where did this singularity come from? What caused its “explosion” and the subsequent expansion of space and matter? How could the complex structures that we see in the universe—galaxies, stars, planets—be formed because of this “explosion”? The Big Bang theory tries to answer these questions.

A brief summary of this theory looks something like this:⁵ Approximately 14 billion years ago the universe was in a state of singularity, and, for reasons we do not understand, this singularity “exploded.” Modern science does not have a theory that explains the processes that took place at that moment. Approximately 10^{-42} seconds after the “explosion” there was an extremely rapid expansion, called “cosmic inflation,” which lasted 10^{-36} seconds and literally “inflated” the universe.

After the inflation, the fundamental “building blocks” of the universe—quarks and gluons—were formed. These formed protons and neu-

**“Do modern theories
provide adequate
answers to questions
regarding the origin
of our universe?”**



trons, which formed the nuclei of the simplest atoms, which included hydrogen, deuterium, helium, and some other light isotopes. After about 400,000 years after “moment zero,” the temperature of the universe, initially infinitely large, dropped so much that the formation of hydrogen atoms became possible.

At that time the universe became transparent to radiation, which, spreading freely in space, reached us in the form of so-called cosmic microwave background radiation. About a billion years after the beginning of cosmic expansion, the first stars and galaxies began to form. The first stars served as “factories” to produce heavy elements born during nuclear reactions, then, as a result of supernova explosions, were thrown into the surrounding space. From these heavy elements, planets and planetary systems were formed.

There are many questions about the Big Bang theory, especially if it’s considered from a purely materialistic point of view—excluding a Creator. Perhaps the most important question, over which scientists have been struggling for more than 50 years, is regarding the nature of singularity. Where did it come from? There is no scientific explanation for such a “super point.” It is something outside of science, closer to the realm of faith—something that points us to the act of creation and the Creator!

Another question about the Big Bang theory is the issue of fine-tuning of the universe in such a way that complex structures can appear in it. Ordinary explosions destroy and disintegrate rather than generate new complex structures. For complex structures such as galaxies, stars, and planets to appear after the Big Bang, this explosion had to be extremely and precisely planned.⁶ Where did this tuning come from? Who carried it out? Blind chance? This would be practically impossible!⁷

In general, for an unbiased researcher, thinking about the origin of the universe leads to the question of an intelligent creation and, accordingly, an omnipotent Creator.

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES

From the viewpoint of modern cosmology, the universe is about 14 billion years old. How does this relate to the biblical account of the creation of the world? The fact that we observe star systems so far away that light takes millions and billions of years

to reach our eyes is strong evidence that the age of the universe is much bigger than the several thousand years that have passed since Creation week.

Based on an in-depth study of the Hebrew text in Genesis 1, many theologians tend to conclude that the creation of the universe took place before the events of Creation week. They suggest that there is a time gap of indefinite duration between the events described in Genesis 1:1, 2 and the rest of the narrative in the chapter. The age of the universe can be much bigger than several thousand years, although the Bible doesn’t comment about this gap or the events that took place during this indefinite period of time. This theory has been called the passive gap theory.⁸

On the other hand, the idea that the universe was created during Creation week, just a few thousand years ago, is often called the no gap theory.⁹ In favor of this view, we can say that the processes that took place during Creation week go beyond the scope of modern science and cannot be understood from a scientific point of view.

Accordingly, the apparent contradictions can be explained by phenomena not yet known to science. Neither position can be considered as the absolute truth, and all the above arguments in support of one or another position should be considered only as assumptions, which could turn out to be incorrect. Our knowledge is far from complete, especially when it comes to the creation of our universe. Give glory to God, who “created the heavens and the earth.”

¹ Robert M. Wald, *General Relativity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

² A. Friedmann, “Über die Krümmung des Raumes,” *Zeitschrift für Physik* 10 (1922): 377-386.

³ G. Lemaitre, “Un Univers Homogène de Masse Constante et de Rayon Croissant Rendu Compte de la Vitesse Radiale des Nébuleuses Extragalactiques,” *Annales de la Société Scientifique de Bruxelles* 47 (1927): 49-59.

⁴ E. Hubble, E. “A Relation Between Distance and Radial Velocity Among Extra-Galactic Nebulae,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 15, no. 3 (1929): 168-173.

⁵ A. Liddle, *An Introduction to Modern Cosmology*, 2nd ed. (London: Wiley, 2003).

⁶ P.C.W. Davies, *The Accidental Universe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

⁷ R. Penrose, *The Emperor’s New Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 344.

⁸ R. M. Davidson, “The Genesis Account of Origins,” in *He Spoke and It Was: Divine Creation in the Old Testament*, ed. Gerald A. Klingbeil (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2015), pp. 47-54.

⁹ *Ibid.*

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The Best Is Yet

The James Webb Space Telescope and faith

MICKEY KUTZNER

Spectacular astronomical images recently released by the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) cause Adventist Christians to ponder the question of Numbers 23:23, “What hath God wrought!” (KJV). Our unique worldview gives us a pretty clear idea of why we are, how we came to be in this condition, and where we are going, but the JWST helps us better understand our place in the universe. It’s a grand place indeed!

The JWST was a \$10 billion project funded jointly by NASA, the European Space Agency, and the Canadian Space Agency. Its complex engineering is unparalleled. From the unfolding, gold-plated beryllium 6.5-meter-diameter mirror to the multilayered, tennis court-sized heat shield, the technological challenges of constructing and launching the JWST were dramatic.

The telescope orbits around the sun, hovering 932,000 miles (1.5 million kilometers) above the

earth. No repairs or upgrades can be made to the system. The JWST sensors detect infrared radiation (longer wavelengths than visible light), allowing observations that complement the images formerly captured by the Hubble Space Telescope (HST).

Even with only a handful of images, the JWST is creating a stir among astrophysicists. Here are a few important areas of study where the JWST is contributing.

RECORD-SETTING DISTANT GALAXIES

The JWST is imaging galaxies at extreme distances from us—perhaps more than 13 billion light-years. Light takes 13 billion years to travel this distance, so astronomers assume that these are infant galaxies formed shortly after the Big Bang. The subsequent expansion of space has stretched the galaxy light into the infrared.

Thousands of such baby galaxies are seen in

to Come



In the upper portion of this JWST image of the stellar nurseries of the Carina Nebula, hot, ionized gas is seen streaming away from the cold, dense region of star formation below. Tiny red dots within the cloud are very young stars. For scale, the surface pillar (upper left) is about 7 light-years in height.

the cluster image of SMACS 0723, appearing as jewels tossed onto a velvet cloth. Cosmological models, which predicted very few such galaxies in the early universe, are being reworked to explain the plethora of galaxies in the images. A key ingredient of science is to allow actual observations to inform theory.

STELLAR NURSERIES

Young stars are currently forming within dense, cool cocoons of dust and gas. The dust and gas absorb and scatter visible light, but are relatively transparent to infrared radiation, making the JWST the ideal instrument for peering into stellar nurseries to learn about the generation of new stars. The image of the Carina Nebula shows a wall of interface where ultraviolet radiation from hot stars above are evaporating the surface of a dense, cool molecular cloud in the lower portion of the image.

Using infrared technology, the JWST sees deep into the cloud interior, revealing infant stars emerging from their dust/gas shrouds as red dots. Careful study of these emerging stars and their environment will yield key information about the process of star creation.

Very recent Webb pictures also reveal colorful, penetrating images of a similar stellar nursery, the Orion Nebula, which has long captivated Adventist thought and imagination.

EXOPLANETS

During the past three decades thousands of exoplanets (planets orbiting stars other than our sun) have been detected. The search for earthlike planets is a very strong motivation in this area of study. The JWST infrared cameras are ideal for studying warm objects like planets. Both the HST and JWST captured images of a gas-giant exoplanet,



This image of galaxy cluster SMACS 0723, is known as Webb's First Deep Field. The entire picture occupies a patch of sky equivalent to holding a grain of sand at arm's distance. With the exception of a handful of stars (seen as starbursts), each object in the frame is a galaxy. Some of the galaxy shapes have been distorted by gravitational lensing (the bending of light by gravitationally-curved space). IMAGE CREDIT: NASA, ESA, CSA, AND STSCI.



The mesmerizing swirls of the Phantom Galaxy as imaged by the JWST infrared cameras. IMAGE CREDIT: NASA, ESA, AND CSA.

but the large distance makes it impossible to discern any surface details.

The JWST's infrared spectrograph is scientifically significant. Different chemicals in an exoplanet atmosphere will absorb different wavelengths. The absorption spectrum of the gas-giant exoplanet WASP-39b shows a distinct blip in the graph, indicating the presence of the carbon-dioxide molecule. This is the first-ever detection of CO₂ in an exoplanet's atmosphere and promises the potential discovery of other simple molecules such as water or methane on other exoplanets.

One fact that is abundantly clear from the study of exoplanets: Planet Earth is the only habitation available to humankind. There is no Plan B exoplanet within any reasonable traveling distance. God needs us to be faithful caretakers of our earth until Jesus returns.

THE AWESOMENESS OF GOD

Allow yourself to be drawn into the sheer aesthetic beauty of the Phantom Galaxy where God's impressionistic style is on full display. This image represents the intersection between the

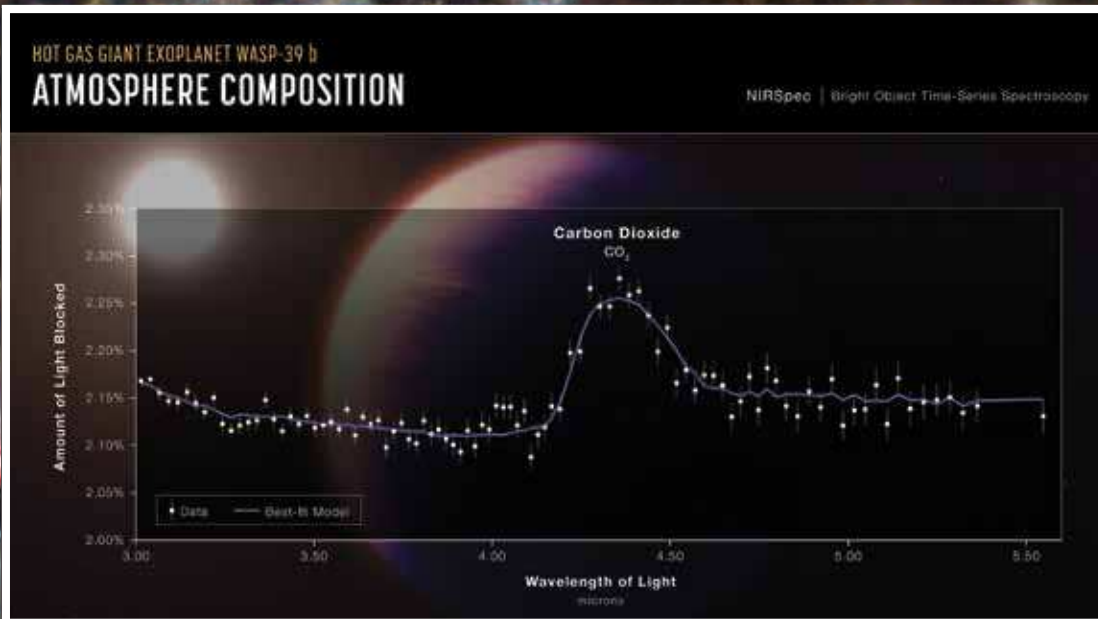
finite comprehension of the human mind and the awesomeness of God as seen through the splendor of His natural creation.

Who can predict what future imagery and data are to be gleaned from the JWST? Ellen White excites us with her lovely hint at research projects we may anticipate throughout the eternity to come: "There, when the veil that darkens our vision shall be removed and our eyes shall behold that world of beauty of which we now catch glimpses through the microscope; when we look on the glories of the heavens, now scanned afar through the telescope; when, the blight of sin removed, the whole earth shall appear 'in the beauty of the Lord our God,' what a field will be open to our study!"*

In the here and now, our response to absorbing these mind-boggling images should be twofold: worship God with high praise as author of all (Ps. 95:6) and live life in accordance with the unbelievable value He has placed on each one of us. 🦋

* Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1952), pp. 547, 548.

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A spectrum graph of the percentage of light absorbed (vertical axis) versus wavelength of infrared radiation (horizontal axis) for exoplanet WASP-39 b. The clear signature bump of absorption at about 4.3 microns of wavelength is clear evidence of the presence of carbon dioxide in the exoplanet's atmosphere. ILLUSTRATIONS: NASA,

ESA, CSA, AND L. HUSTAK (STSCI); SCIENCE: THE JWST TRANSITING EXOPLANET COMMUNITY EARLY RELEASE SCIENCE TEAM

More Than Mere Coincidence

The universe is the handiwork of the Fine-tuner.

LORENZO M. PROCOPIO

Daniel 12:4 tells us, “Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.” This prophecy is being demonstrated now. As technology advances and comprehension of the complexity of our universe increases, physicists are achieving more and more precise measurements and a deeper knowledge of our universe. Science can explain the microscopic world, where our best current theory called quantum mechanics explains the behavior from fundamental particles to chemical reactions, and the macroscopic world, where our best current theory called general relativity explains the dynamics of galaxies and the effects of gravity on a large scale. This knowledge has led physicists to arrive at two seemingly opposite views.

On one hand, the success in science has caused many scientists to believe that there is no need to consider God in explaining our universe. This view can be exemplified in the celebrated apocryphal phrase when the renowned scientist Pierre Laplace told Emperor Napoleon why it was not necessary to mention God in his book. He said, “I had no need of that hypothesis.”

On the other hand, refined observations in the universe have, to some extent, encouraged scientists to admit that a large number of physical conditions in our universe must coincide for the existence of life. This unexpected view opens the door to the possibility that the universe might not just be a result of pure random processes, but that it has been carefully designed with the right conditions for life.

COINCIDENCE OR DIVINE DESIGN?

Those coincidences are known as *anthropic coincidences* and are the basis of what is called

the *anthropic principle*. This principle is divided into two main versions: the *weak anthropic principle*, which claims that conditions in our universe are consistent with life to exist, and the *strong anthropic principle*, which claims that the universe has properties that must allow life to exist. The first one comes from pure logic, while the second one goes further from logic. To some extent, the anthropic principle suggests that the current conditions in the universe are special or privileged to allow life to exist. However, how do we know which conditions are special for life?

Physicists have realized that if certain parameters change slightly, there would be dramatic conditions in the universe so that it would not be possible to sustain life or even for life to exist at all. There is clear evidence to believe that the universe is in a privileged condition. The number of coincidences needed to allow life to exist is great. As science progresses, more anthropic coincidences are appearing. Among them, the most known anthropic coincidences are related to the fundamental forces in our universe.

BALANCING THE NUMBERS

To our knowledge, there are only four kinds of fundamental forces to describe all interactions in our universe. Those forces are the *strong nuclear force*, the *weak nuclear force*, the *electromagnetic force* and the *gravitational force*. It has been widely discussed that if the strengths and balance between those forces were a little bit weaker or stronger than the current values, then catastrophic consequences in the universe would prevent the existence of life.

For example, if the strong nuclear force were

10 percent weaker,¹ it wouldn't be possible to form chemical elements; in particular, it wouldn't be possible to form deuterium, because a proton and a neutron couldn't be combined to form it. Without deuterium, nuclear fusion would not be possible in our sun, and without the sun, life wouldn't exist. Now, if we compare the strong nuclear force with the electromagnetic force, it turns out that the strong nuclear force is about 100 times stronger than the electromagnetic force. This creates a balance between the repulsive electromagnetic force and the attractive nuclear strong force between protons inside the atoms. This allows for creating more than 100 stable chemical elements, of which around 25 of them are necessary for biological life. If the electromagnetic force were slightly stronger, the number of chemical elements would be reduced. The stronger the electromagnetic force, the fewer stable chemical elements there would be. Thus, life would not exist.

Likewise, when we compare the strength of the electromagnetic force with the strength of gravity force, there is also a perfect balance. It is known that the electromagnetic force is about 10^{40} times² stronger than the strength of gravity force.³ This particular ratio creates a balance between the electromagnetic radiation pressure and the inner gravity force in the sun. If the force of gravity were slightly different, the sun would no longer exist as it is now. It would end as a different type of star, like a red dwarf,⁴ if gravity force were slightly stronger, or a blue super giant star, if gravity force were slightly weaker. In all of these examples, those strengths are at the right value to allow life to exist.

Furthermore, physicists have learned that the range of those possible values is much narrower than they expected, and only when those values are exact can life exist. Additionally, it is quite surprising that some specific numerical values of essential physical parameters of the universe have the values that they do. For instance, the parameter that determines the strength of gravitational effects in empty space, the so-called cosmological constant, has a value of less than about 10^{-120} .⁵ This value is an extremely small number, which physicists don't know why the universe has to be adjusting with remarkable precision to allow life to exist.

A FINE-TUNED UNIVERSE

Cosmological data shows that the cosmological constant is not zero. It's close to zero, but not zero. Physicists have predicted that if this value were slightly different, the universe would no longer exist. Until now, nobody knows why the cosmological constant has this value. However, what we can learn from this value and from the strengths of the fundamental forces is that the universe has been carefully tuned with such high precision and balance as to allow life to exist. This idea leads us to interpret the anthropic principle as a logical explanation and that the reason the universe is fine-tuned is that there is a Fine-tuner. Isaiah 66:2 says: "For My hand made all these things, so all these things came into being," declares the Lord" (NASB).

Most physicists have resisted this interpretation, giving rise to others' interpretations, such as the multiverse or consciousness interpretation. Despite these other interpretations, I must say that the interpretation of the fine-tuned universe by a tuner, such as a personal God, is by far the most convincing one. According to Colossians 1:16, 17: "For by Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."

There is overwhelming cosmological data for supporting the tuner interpretation, namely our personal testimonies. Contrary to Laplace, I would conclude that we do have need of that great hypothesis. ♣

¹ Stephen M. Barr, *Modern Physics and Ancient Faith* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003).

² 10^{40} indicates that the decimal point in the number 10 would move 40 places to the right, which would result in an extremely large number.

³ Brandon Carter, "Large Number Coincidences and the Anthropic Principle in Cosmology," in *Confrontation of Cosmological Theories With Observational Data*, ed. M. S. Longair (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 1974), pp. 291-298.

⁴ Paul Davies, *God and the New Physics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984).

⁵ 10^{-120} indicates that the decimal point in the number 10 would move 120 places to the left, resulting in a number extremely small, and close to zero.

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Searching for Life Beyond Our System

Will the James Webb Space Telescope help discover new, habitable planets?

RYAN T. HAYES

Finding an earthlike planet or one that could be inhabited is possible. The James Webb Space Telescope is equipped with near-infrared (NIR) cameras and spectrometers that are already helping astronomers peer into the chemical composition of distant planets. In the near-infrared region of the electromagnetic spectrum, many molecular signatures are detected. Spectroscopic techniques can identify the atmospheric composition of planets as they move around their star. Their sun will act as a light source that will shine through the planet's atmosphere. The resulting light is then compared to the energy before and after the planet moves through the light shining toward us.

The exoplanet's atmospheric molecules leave their molecular signature in the near-infrared regions of the electromagnetic spectrum where the telescope spectrometers are tuned. NASA has a great explanation of this process on its website.¹ The molecular signatures are extremely weak, but many molecules are discernible with repeated measurements, and all of this data should allow scientists to determine which molecules are present and the relative amounts of each. Reports are already being published. For example, carbon dioxide was identified in the atmosphere of the exoplanet WASP-39b using the telescope.²

FACTORS NEEDED FOR A HABITABLE PLANET

Which molecules can the telescope detect? The list includes such molecules as water, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, methanol, ammonia, and methane. This is a very interesting list of atmospheric molecules that seemingly give a sense of a planet's habitability. What might be overlooked is that these molecules are all infrared-active, which makes these good greenhouse gases. This is not a bad thing, but the spectrometers on the telescope cannot pick up other important life-permitting molecules such as dioxygen and dinitrogen. Detecting water in the atmosphere of distant planets is right in the wheelhouse of this new telescope, and many scientists are trying to book time on the telescope to assist in this detection process.³ The information relative to the





The James Webb Space Telescope's mirror hanging from the ceiling of a NASA warehouse. Workers in white coveralls are dwarfed standing beneath it. The mirror is composed of 18 hexagonal metallic gold-colored tiles.

water content of alien atmospheres will be extremely helpful in understanding the prevalence of water throughout the cosmos. A recent study of the atmosphere of exoplanet VHS 1256-1257 b suggests water is present along with silicates, methane, carbon monoxide, and carbon dioxide.⁴ Could this be a habitable place for life?

When it comes to determining if these planets are habitable, a whole host of chemical factors need to be considered, and the telescope will provide some of these details. Unfortunately, it will not provide a complete picture. From most reports, the general sense of a planet's habitability is that it resides in the habitable zone, which allows liquid water to exist. However, a planet needs more than just liquid water. I would suggest that the presence of dioxygen and dinitrogen are just as important. These gases can support complex life along with a small, variable amount of greenhouse gases to heat the planet.

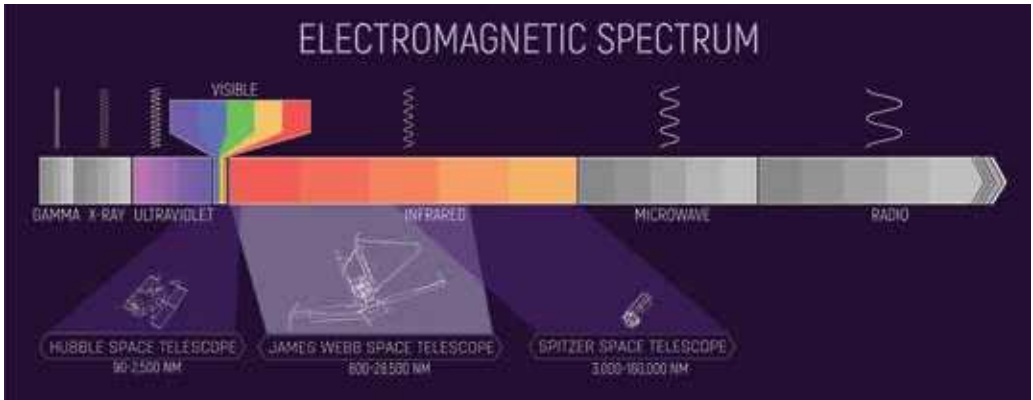
The planet cannot have too many greenhouse gases, since many of them are toxic or too heavy, and they could displace oxygen and suffocate any inhabitants. A habitable planet needs oxygen and nitrogen in nearly the same ratios found on earth. Oxygen is critical for complex and larger life forms to exist.⁵ It is possible that some microbes could exist on planets without oxygen, but creatures bigger than unicellular anaerobes require dioxygen to power their metabolism.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DINITROGEN, OTHER PARAMETERS

Why is dinitrogen so critical? In my study I have identified at least 10 parameters that make dinitrogen the ideal partner for dioxygen. Observing dinitrogen along with dioxygen in the atmospheres of potentially habitable planets will provide a more definite picture. Unfortunately, these diatomic molecules have their spectral signatures in the X-ray and UV region of the electromagnetic spectrum, which is not part of the telescope's instrumentation. The planet's atmosphere is responsible for maintaining liquid water with about 15 psi (pounds per square inch) of pressure. Dioxygen makes up about 3 psi, but the remaining 12 psi needs to come from a diatomic molecule that is similar to oxygen's density and must have the following attributes:

- » unreactive to oxygen
- » nonflammable
- » transparent in the visible/infrared
- » nongreenhouse-forming
- » some ability to absorb harmful short wavelength radiation (UV, X-ray, and gamma ray)
- » nonreactive to life (inert)
- » minimally soluble in water
- » nonacidifying in water
- » useful for life

No other molecule matches these criteria as precisely as dinitrogen. The total air pressure is critical, as that sets the proper pressure to maintain water as a liquid. Too



NASA AND J. OLIMSTED

little pressure, and water will evaporate into the air, causing an increase in humidity, global warming, and removal of water from lakes, rivers, and organisms. Too much air pressure will effectively shut down the water cycle that cleanses and desalinates water for reuse. To find a habitable planet for humans, earth's atmosphere sets the standard for many chemical reasons.

The local star near an exoplanet also needs to be a good match that resembles our own sun in terms of its spectral output. If the star produces too much energy in the infrared or near-infrared range, this light does not have sufficient energy to drive photosynthesis and other life-permitting chemical reactions. If the star produces too much energy in the UV range (or X-ray and gamma ray), this will destroy any carbon-based molecules, which is the only type of atom that meets the fitness requirements for life.⁶

The number of parameters is quite long, making earth a rare exception in the universe, according to some scientists.⁷ The telescope expands our view and understanding of the chemical composition of exoplanet atmospheres. All of this new information will help us understand how common certain atmospheric molecules are in the universe. The scientific community will get a better understanding of the probability of finding an earthlike planet. But will we find earth's equal? The telescope is a nice step forward in this search, but the probability seems quite low, given all of the requirements. Until we can get a complete chemical profile of an exoplanet's atmosphere, looking for water and the other infrared-active gases will be a nice step forward, but it will fall far short.

What does Scripture say about other habitable planets? Is there a chance that some worlds could

support life? Some have suggested that the "sons of God," mentioned in Job 1:6, 7, who visit in heaven could indicate other planets with human-like inhabitants. From Ellen White's writings, we know that other inhabited worlds do exist but are beyond our reach. In *Early Writings* White writes, "Then the angel said, 'You must go back, and if you are faithful, you, with the 144,000, shall have the privilege of visiting all the worlds and viewing the handiwork of God.'"⁸ I firmly believe there are other habitable planets, but they exist by God's design and only by His handiwork. The telescope will help determine the possibility of a habitable planet, and this new information will help the world see the might and power of our Creator's hand. 🍃

¹ C. Pulliam, "NASA's Webb Space Telescope to Inspect Atmospheres of Gas Giant Exoplanets," *NASA.gov*, July 11, 2018, <https://www.nasa.gov/feature/goddard/2018/nasa-s-webb-space-telescope-to-inspect-atmospheres-of-gas-giant-exoplanets>.

² T. Pultarova, "James Webb Space Telescope Sniffs Out Carbon Dioxide Around an Alien World," *Space.com*, 2022, <https://www.space.com/james-webb-space-telescope-exoplanet-carbon-dioxide>.

³ K. Cooper, "Possible Water World Spotted Orbiting an Alien Star," *Space.com*, 2022, <https://www.space.com/ocean-world-habitable-zone-potential-detection>.

⁴ B. E. Miles et al., "The TELESCOPE: Early Release Science Program for Direct Observations of Exoplanetary Systems II: A 1 to 20 Micron Spectrum of the Planetary-Mass Companion VHS 1256-1257 b," 2022, arXiv:2209.00620v1.

⁵ N. Lane, *Oxygen: The Molecule That Made the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁶ M. Denton, *Nature's Destiny: How the Laws of Biology Reveal Purpose in the Universe* (New York: Free Press, 2002).

⁷ See, for example, G. Gonzalez and J. W. Richards, *The Privileged Planet: How Our Place in the Cosmos Is Designed for Discovery* (Washington, D.C.: Gateway Editions, 2020) and P. D. Ward and D. Brownlee, *Rare Earth: Why Complex Life is Uncommon in the Universe* (New York: Springer, 2000).

⁸ Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1882, 1945), p. 40.

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THE DYING ORPHAN'S FEAR

One of the most poignant scenes in a rather gruesome book (*Bloody Okinawa: The Last Great Battle of World War II*, by Joseph Wheelan) was about a sailor dying from a kamikaze attack. Badly burned, he uttered to the navy corpsman trying to help him, "Doc, I'm an orphan. Who is going to remember me?" The corpsman said that he would remember him every day of his own life. Perhaps that kindly corpsman did, but what about when the corpsman died? Who will remember him then?

However dramatic the background, the dying orphan's fear reflects something embedded deep in our souls about wanting to be remembered. Yes, there are immortalized historical figures, but they are what among the billions of forgotten dead? You can walk through cemeteries with some so long gone that even their stone inscriptions have been flattened by time, and visited only by birds and squirrels. And these were those purposely interred; what about those numberless ones heaped in piles and burned, or buried in mass graves, with only a carved monument to commemorate individual moms, dads, siblings, children, and infants whose names have long been forgotten? For how many is there no monument at all?

Some, like the British royalty, have photos, paintings, and titles that reach back generations, the same generations that for the rest of us melt down memories and names until they vaporize into wherever lost memories and names go. How far back before your own family tree vanishes into oblivion? Mine, beyond my grandparents, did so by 1945.

"I stare at this ceaseless, rushing crowd,"

wrote Japanese author Haruki Murakami, "and imagine a time a hundred years from now. In a hundred years everybody here—me included—will have disappeared from the face of the earth and turned into ashes or dust."

And how long before even those ashes are forgotten?

It is a dilemma. But only a secularistic dilemma, which is why many secularists are so pessimistic about the meaning of life, calling it absurd, pointless, and purposeless. After all, depending upon the numbers physicists plug into their formulas, the universe, we're told, is either going to burn out, rip apart, or collapse in on itself, leaving only ruins for eternity. And who is going to be remembered then?

In contrast, the biblical worldview gives us a God who knows and loves us all, a God who—noting a sparrow's fall to the ground (Matt. 10:29)—will never forget anyone, even that dying orphan. We are promised that, because we believe in Jesus, instead of being burned up, collapsed, or ripped apart and forgotten in eternity, we are going to be swept up and carried, loving and being loved in a "new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1) where "there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4), kamikazes and dying orphans included.

*Haruki Murakami, *Kafka on the Shore* (New York, Vintage International, Knopf Doubleday Pub. Group, Kindle Edition), p. 52.

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CLIFF'S
EDGE
CLIFFORD
GOLDSTEIN



THE DYING
ORPHAN'S FEAR
REFLECTS
SOMETHING
EMBEDDED DEEP
IN OUR SOULS
ABOUT WANTING TO
BE REMEMBERED.

“WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT”

*Living in the here and
now of God’s presence*

OLIVIA D. VALENTINE



Do you long to hear God exclaim to you “Well done” when He comes to take you home to heaven? (see Matt. 25:23).

For me—and I expect for most if not all of us—the answer is “Yes.” After all, the alternative doesn’t generate the feelings of joyful expectancy and peace, perhaps, that walking along the sea of glass might. While hearing the Lord say to me “Well done” has always been an important goal. I’ve realized only recently that those two words, and the heaven to which they grant us entrance, haven’t always been my priority. Instead, my focus has often been on what I want for my life here on this earth.

FOCUS

Like many of us, I’m going through life studying and working hard so I can enjoy the fruits of my labor here, and along the way also do my duty as a Christian. After all, when my life here is over and I’m with Jesus, I want to bask in the joy of the “Well done.” We think about that in a wistful sort of way, like a child who hears “They lived happily ever

after” at the end of a story. It’s like a sigh of relief that awaits *us*, far away from everything that’s happening to us *now*; real. In the same way that retirement is real for most people under the age of 25, it isn’t often at the forefront of their minds.

Understandable, some would argue. After all, this planet and the life we’ve lived here for millennia are all we’ve ever known. We prepare, save, and accumulate our material possessions and take pride in our accomplishments. We do all we can to ensure that even if we can’t enjoy all the luxuries of this life, at least we’ll never lack the necessities.

Even as Seventh-day Adventists, when we hear the story of the Great Disappointment and the early Advent believers who sold all they had in expectation of the imminent return of Jesus, many of us find it difficult not to ask, “Sell everything? What if . . . ?” We still long to enjoy first what others on earth have enjoyed: material security, the routine of a happy life, and making a mark on the world—this world.

PRIORITIES

While we’re born with the possibility, or the potential, of “grandeur,” no one is promised that. God wants us to prosper and relish the fleeting joy that still exists here on earth (see Jer. 29:11, NIV). In the Bible are numerous examples and stories of persons God blessed with a life of relative ease. Even if our own life isn’t luxurious or easy, we’re still richly blessed when we remember good experiences.

Through the apostle John, God assures us that while we live here on earth, He wants us to “prosper in all things and be in health” (3 John 2). Many years before John, through the prophet Jeremiah, God also tells us that the thoughts that He thinks toward us are of “peace, and not of evil, to give [us] a future and a hope” (Jer. 29:11).

Unfortunately, because of sin, an existence of total sublimity here isn’t possible, and the ugly truth. As the adage reminds us, the ugly truth is that “there are only two things certain in this life: death and taxes.” As Christians we must ask our-

We still long to enjoy first what others on earth have enjoyed: material security, the routine of a happy life, and making a mark on the world—this world.

selves whether our primary goal is to gain fortune and fame. Are we relegating to afterthought what we *know* is guaranteed to us if we give our hearts and lives fully to Jesus. Happiness and joy await us on the other side of “Well done.”

ABRAHAM’S EXAMPLE

I haven’t yet figured out the perfect balance between the two, but the finest biblical example I can think of is Abraham. In faith, Abraham made his home and prospered in the very real, very physical land that God Himself promised and gave to him and his descendants. He, his family, and others with him, however, lived there in tents, like strangers. Why? Was Abraham afraid that God would take back the material blessings He had promised him? Was he a miser who didn’t want to spend his hard-earned money to build more permanent lodgings? Of course not. Instead, as Hebrews 11:10 tells us, “He was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (NIV).

Abraham lived and worked through God’s grace in preparation for what would be the magnum opus of his life, that is, to hear “Well done.” He enjoyed the material wealth that came along the way—not the other way round.

That seems like a wise plan to me. ♣

Olivia D. Valentine is a medical student at Montemorelos University in Mexico who enjoys serving others through public health and medical missions.

LESSONS ON A TRIP

One little boy and more led to some simple truths.



MERLE POIRIER

I'm not fond of heights. I'm not petrified, but if given the opportunity, I'll avoid them. This past summer when my family took a trip to British Columbia and Alaska, I discovered it wasn't uncommon to find yourself on a mountain. The higher the better, it would seem, because clearly it's all about the view. Since my traveling companions didn't have similar issues with height, they planned excursions around places that involved being off the ground.

Capilano Suspension Bridge Park is in Vancouver, British Columbia. Our group thought it would be a lovely place to spend Sabbath. And they were right. It's beautiful—a lovely forest with huge trees and wooden boardwalk paths with reflecting ponds. But people don't go to Capilano Park for these features. As its name might suggest, they go for the bridge. A suspension bridge.

As you might suspect, I wasn't a fan of this adventure. Initially I said, "No." I would wait for the others. There were, however, two important factors to consider. First, there's more to this park, but most of it is on the other side of the bridge. If you come and you don't cross the bridge, you're spending all your time watching people go through a gift shop or buying hot dogs. Second, there was my 6-year-old grandson, Connor.

While the adults in our group were having a bit of fun with my fear along with a mix of encouragement, Connor simply came up, took my hand, and said, "I'll walk you across, and you will be safe. Just take my hand."

I had a death grip on the bridge, and people stacked up behind us because we were moving so slow (in the picture, left/middle, I'm in a white jacket with blue backpack; Connor is just in front). And yes, the bridge swayed side to side and up and down, especially when someone thought it would be fun to jump on it. But that leads me to the first lesson.

LESSON ONE: BE SUPPORTIVE. To be totally honest, Connor made the trip across the bridge more challenging than it might have been because of the difference between his height and mine as well as his idea that pulling me across was the best option; but he held my hand and asked me to trust him. For me, that was worth crossing the bridge. When we come across those who are frightened or need help, be supportive. Do your part, even if it means only holding someone's hand.

On the following weekend we were back in Vancouver again. Of course, someone in our group thought an excursion up a mountain in a gondola would be super fun to do. This time I drew the line. Even though there was much cajoling, I sat contentedly at the bottom and

LEARNED TO ALASKA

read a book while the rest of the group went up the mountain.

When grandson Connor came down, he ran over to me and said, “I have something for you, Grammie. I didn’t want you to miss out even though you were scared. I made this for you.” He then produced the old cell phone he was given to take pictures and videos, and on his own, with no prompting from his parents, he made a video of the gondola trip.¹

LESSON TWO: BE THOUGHTFUL. Connor’s thoughtful video of the Sea to Sky Gondola experience continues to make my stomach lurch each time I watch it, but it also reminds me that this little boy didn’t judge my fear; he thought only of a way to make me feel included. And it worked! I didn’t go on the ride, but I could understand when the rest of the group chatted about their experience. How often do we think of including others? Just a small thing, but it can make a big difference.

One of my favorite excursions during our trip was going gold panning. It was said we were working in the very stream where it all started. Reportedly, 1,000 pounds of gold were taken out of these waters and carried down the mountain, launching the Gold Rush of 1896. A school bus driver from Texas who drove all the way to Alaska to spend his summer leading tours and panning for gold acted as our teacher and guide (shown at right).

A 30-minute process of panning for gold yielded about 20 gold flakes, which I was able to bring home. For a moment I felt lucky and rich. I must admit that it was a bit addicting. The water temperature was about 37 degrees (Fahrenheit) and it was raining, but I could have stood there longer hunting for buried treasure.

LESSON THREE: LOOK FOR GOLD. But in this case I’m not referring to a treasure that fades or can be lost or stolen, but to one that lasts. Studying the Scriptures is just like panning for gold. It isn’t a quick process. It takes time, skill, and care. But be someone who invests their time in digging for scriptural golden nuggets and store up your treasure in heaven.

My family went to Alaska with preconceived ideas that originated with calendar pictures, social media, and YouTube. We thought that the sun shone every day in the summer and that there was an animal around every corner. In reality, Alaska can be wet—very wet. Annual rainfall in the areas we visited is 10 feet or more. There was thick cloud cover where sometimes the clouds were no longer in the sky but literally hovering off the ground,





There was no beauty, yet we knew it was there, because we'd just experienced it.

giving a new meaning to walking in the clouds. While we were there, the temperatures never got much higher than 58 degrees (Fahrenheit). And animals? For us, nary an animal or bird, unless you paid someone to go find them.

One of our excursions was a boat ride to find sea otters and whales. The rain was persistent for most of the trip. I prayed to see a whale. I wasn't asking for much. Just one whale that would pop up alongside the boat and we'd all go "Wow!" We'd snap our pictures and rejoice. But for a long time what we saw were only whale flukes. I'd prayed to see a whale, *and* it also was my birthday, and for whatever reason God hadn't seen fit to answer that prayer in spite of my circumstances. But at the end of the day I joined up with my daughter, who'd taken a similar but separate excursion. She and her husband had seen two whales, no tails, but they were too far away for pictures. And the boat had been so rocky that people had gotten seasick. We'd had smooth waters and had seen seven whales, with the opportunity to get several tail shots.

LESSON FOUR: BE CONTENT. My prayers *had been* answered. No, the whales didn't jump out of the water or swim alongside the boat, but if you saw in the news what happened in Plymouth, Massachusetts, in July 2022, where a whale breached right next to and fell on top of a boat, one realizes that not having a whale jump up right next to your boat might actually be a good thing.²

And finally, I mentioned the weather. For the first couple of days of our vacation it was a tad discouraging. Cold, wet, clouds, rain, and more clouds. But my mind kept remembering when we first flew into Vancouver. It was the beginning of sunset on Friday evening. We hadn't planned on arriving so close to the Sabbath, but our airline had other ideas. What we saw was a spectacular scene of the sun beginning to set across the clouds. But as the plane descended, all the splendor disappeared, and it became dark, rainy, and overcast. There was no beauty, yet we knew it was there, just above us, because we'd just experienced it.

LESSON FIVE: REMEMBER THE SILVER LINING. I realized that no matter how dark and dreary our days, how cold or rainy it is, how much the sun is hidden from our eyes, from heaven's vantage point (top down) the sun is always shining, and the clouds are always fluffy and white. It's always on the other side waiting.

Even in our darkest hours we can remember the blessings that God has given us, just as we experienced beauty before darkness. This becomes the most important lesson of all—God is there. He's always the same. And He's prepared a place that elevates us beyond this earth and all its dreariness.

Oh, and then I won't be afraid of heights anymore! 🍀

¹ To view Connor's video, see the online version of this article at [adventistreview.org/feature/lessons-learned-on-a-trip-to-alaska](https://www.adventistreview.org/feature/lessons-learned-on-a-trip-to-alaska).

² To see footage of this event, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5LT4bE6vXc8>.

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THE GIFT OF GRACE

*A treasure
often taken
for granted*

TIMOTHY OMWEGA

I am not proud that I failed my American driving test twice. I was so confident I would pass the first time that I didn't even study the driver's manual I had received. I thought the road test would be similar to the one in Kenya, my home country. I soon learned that driving rules are different in the United States.

I was embarrassed to tell my wife I had failed without even leaving the parking lot. So I did what any other man would do—I took the test again. This time I practiced my parallel parking skills. God was teaching me humility, to have confidence, not in my abilities, but in my preparation.

PREPARATION MATTERS

Jesus warned the disciples to watch and pray, for they did not know the time of His return (Matt. 25:13). In the same chapter, we learn from the parable of the 10 virgins that the wise joined the wedding party simply because they prepared, while the foolish missed out for lack of buying extra oil for their lamps.

I finally got the much-desired driver's license after my third test. The joy in that accomplishment made me forget the heartache I felt



“My hands were shaking and sweaty as I handed him the papers.”

the two times I had failed. The following month was winter break at Andrews University, where I am earning a Master of Divinity and Chaplaincy degree. My wife, kids, and I were excited because we planned to go and spend time with family in Minnesota, nine hours away.

This was going to be my first long drive, and a memorable one because I had recently received my license. Off we went on our adventure, and all was well for most of the journey. I was proud that I had made it past Chicago, notorious for its traffic jams. We were cruising a Wisconsin highway, two hours away from our destination, when my children, ages 2½ and 3 months, started crying. Amazingly, they had not cried or complained the whole trip. Suddenly they were not only crying, but literally screaming. My wife suggested we find an exit and take a break so she could nurse the little one and let Zachary grab a snack. I increased my speed so we could get to a rest stop as soon as possible.

The speed limit was 70 mph, but I was hovering around 85 mph. Before long, I heard a siren and saw flashing lights behind me. I tried to slow down when I saw it, but it was too late. We pulled over, the police car following behind.

“License and registration, please,” said the policeman. At this moment I remembered that the car was borrowed and my license was very new. My hands were shaking and sweaty as I handed him the papers. I prayed that he would hear our children’s cries and be merciful. He seemed unaffected, however, and told us to wait in the car as he went back to check my papers.

My heart was pounding when I saw the policeman coming back to our car. I had formulated an apologetic speech where I would reference my kids in hope that their weeping would sway him to show us grace and mercy. That didn’t work. The officer gave me a \$200 citation and warned me to drive carefully, because speeding kills. I drove within the speed limit the rest of the way to Minnesota.

A DIFFERENT OUTCOME

It took me a while to get over that experience. We were struggling, unsponsored students trying to make ends meet with two kids to feed. Although I was upset for not receiving grace, I knew it was my fault. The consequences could have been much worse. I thank God that I received a ticket that night, because the policeman was right—driving too fast can lead to an accident, even death.

Fast-forward a month later, a brand-new year, and I was excited to see what 2022 would bring. One Friday afternoon I drove to the grocery store to prepare for the Sabbath. I took a wrong turn



and did not notice that a police car was behind me. There went the lights and siren again. My heart sank, and my shoulders dropped.

"License and registration, please. Did you notice that you were not supposed to make that turn?"

"Yes, Officer," I said. "I noticed only when I had already turned, and it was too late to go back. I am sorry, and I promise that it won't happen again. I am a student at Andrews University, and I was going to the store to buy some groceries for my family," I pleaded.

The officer went to review my license and registration. I prayed to the Lord and asked Him to sway his heart. I said to Him, "Lord, I don't have much money. I just recently got fined for speeding, and if I receive another citation, my driver's license could be revoked. Please soften that policeman's heart. Amen."

As I saw the policeman walking back toward me, my heart was pounding.

"Look here, son, your car registration has expired also. Do you know that it is a felony to drive a car like that?"

"I didn't know, Officer. I'm an international student, and I borrowed this car." The officer paused, looked at me, and said he was going to let me go with a warning this time, but I needed to

let my friend know to update his registration.

I was perspiring, even though it was winter. As he walked away after showing me grace, I realized that the law I had broken was even more serious than the one on the Wisconsin highway.

I said a prayer of thanksgiving, breathed a huge sigh of relief, and went to get the groceries that I needed. When I told my wife about this encounter, she was shocked, but we hugged, whispered a prayer, and laughed a bit in disbelief at what had happened.

Sin is the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4). When God told Adam and Eve the consequences of eating the forbidden fruit, He meant it. God's law is the transcript of His character. The God who gave the law is the same God who took the punishment for the sake of His disobedient children.

Such love is incomprehensible. When I think about the grace God gives me every day when I deserve nothing but condemnation and punishment for my sins, I can say only, *Thank You for the cross, Lord. Thank You for the price You paid. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, that I may live an abundant life, free of condemnation.* ✍

Timothy Omwega is an international student at Andrews University in Michigan.



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THE HOLLYWOOD INFLUENCE

Modern movies are showcasing a variety of over-the-top depictions of the future status and appearance of Planet Earth. Many of these sci-fi innovations promote the infinite power of machines and the subservience of humans to them in a postapocalyptic reality. The plotline of this movie genre is the premise that artificial intelligence (AI) keeps increasing in power. In the future, AI could very well become dominant, dangerous, and an authoritarian ruler of the world. But have no fear, do not panic, because truth from the Word of God in Isaiah 65:17-24 and Revelation 21:1-5 negates Hollywood's doomsday projections of the new earth.

In these passages are real facts and features of the new earth, vividly described from God's perspective. And as Adventists, we believe and teach that the Garden of Eden, in all its splendor from the beginning before sin, will be fully restored. For example, the equality between male and female, peace between humans and animals, the true understanding of Sabbath and marriage, plus in-person visits from all members of the Godhead, will be restored in the new earth. Try to imagine what this will be like! Gone will be all aspects of sin, including racism, injustice, prejudice, violence. There'll be no more pandemic, death, weeping, fighting, or lying. There'll be no more mental maladies, promiscuity, prostitution, divorce, or depression; no homeless, poor, or people without land, for they will all inherit the earth without taxes. They will build homes, and plant and reap crops, without fear or worry about invaders to rob them or terrorists

to kill them. There'll be no more wars or rumors of war; no bombs, bullets, or devastating nuclear devices. All these things will be gone, and we will remember them no more!

Do you ever find yourself fascinated by books, magazines, and TV shows that depict the way the other half—the rich and famous of our world—lives? If so, you're not alone. The Bible tells us that the queen of Sheba was so fascinated by stories of the wealth and wisdom of Solomon that she traveled hundreds of miles over very rocky roads to visit King Solomon, to test his wisdom, and to observe his luxurious lifestyle. This fascination continues today, but we've seen nothing yet; for through the prophet Isaiah the Lord reveals a lifestyle that we could never imagine, one that far surpasses those lifestyles depicted on television or in magazines. It's not the lifestyle of the rich and famous, but of the saved and saints of God triumphant in the new earth.

So what are we to do? Remember the apostle Paul's prescription for a healthy Christian life in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18? "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." There's a time for quiet solemnity and celebration; but the response of recipients of God's gift of salvation by grace through faith, His outpouring of mercy, and His promise of the new earth call us to rejoice.

Are you ready to rejoice? *Havah Nagilah!* Let us rejoice! 🍀

Hyveth Williams is a professor at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University.

CURE FOR THE COMMON LIFE
HYVETH WILLIAMS



THROUGH THE PROPHET ISAIAH THE LORD REVEALS A LIFESTYLE THAT WE COULD NEVER IMAGINE, ONE THAT FAR SURPASSES THOSE LIFESTYLES DEPICTED ON TELEVISION OR IN MAGAZINES.

THANK YOU!

THE GRATEFUL STANCE

*Toward a theology
of thankfulness*

GERALD A. KLINGBEIL

Every year around November we suddenly all remember thankfulness. Advertisers make sure that we can't forget. Thanksgiving, celebrated on the fourth Thursday in the month of November in the United States, and the second Monday in Canada, is a major public holiday offering a yearly opportunity to remember and celebrate community and "give thanks."

This one day of thanksgiving, however, seldom translates into an attitude of gratitude. When Black Friday sales in the U.S. hit us with deals and bargains we tend to forget our true needs and try to fill the hole in our soul with more things and notions of more, bigger, better, faster, or more beautiful.

So how can we discipline our hearts to live a life of thanksgiving instead of celebrating only a single day? How can an attitude of gratitude take root in the desert of selfishness, distraction, pain, and thirst for more?

Gratitude and thankfulness are important values in Scripture, for they have an impact how we relate to our world, our neighbors, and—most important—to the One who spoke this world into existence. Let's look at this topic through the lens of both the Old and the New Testaments to catch a glimpse of

the big picture. Since space is always an issue in a magazine, we will limit ourselves to look only at examples from the Psalms, the hymnal of the Old Testament, and from some of the letters written by the apostle Paul offering pastoral care to faraway congregations.

THE CONTEXT OF THANKSGIVING

People in the ancient Near East worshipped deities that required careful attention and care. Gods needed to be fed, and received offerings and gifts, which, in turn, at least in the mind of the worshipper, would cause the deity to bless the petitioner accordingly. More gifts meant more blessings. Choicer meats meant greater victories.

Scripture offers us different, diametrically opposed, values. God is not to be bought, not even by sacrifices or offerings (see Isa. 1:11-15; Hosea 6:6; Amos 5:21-27), or manipulated. His gifts are given freely because He is good and is driven by love for a fallen world (cf. John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). Consequently, thanksgiving in the Psalms is *not* contractual, namely, “you do something for me, and I will then give you thanks.” Rather, giving thanks is *relational*. We give thanks because we trust the Lord to hear us, save us, bless us, comfort us, or even vindicate us because we know Him and recognize and remember His goodness in our lives.

Psalm 7 concludes a “group of prayers (Pss. 3-7) that are connected to existential needs (protection; health; vindication; deliverance; and so on) with an appeal to the divine judge based on the psalmist’s innocence,” writes Psalms scholar Martin Klingbeil.¹ After appealing for deliverance and vindication, the author of Psalm 7 concludes in verse 17: “I will give to the Lord the thanks due to his righteousness, and I will sing praise to the name of the Lord, the Most High” (ESV). A quick comparison of the translation of Psalm 7:17 in the NKJV helps us understand a unique characteristic of Hebrew terminology related to thankfulness. The verbal root *yadah*, translated with “give thanks” in the ESV, can also be translated as “praise” or “confess” (as seen in the NKJV). Giving thanks is intricately connected to praise. We “thank” (or “praise” or “confess”) Him because we recognize *who* He is and *how* He is. His righteousness and goodness are plainly visible in how He deals with His people and this world—past, present, and future.

Psalm 100’s superscript designates the text as

a “psalm of thanksgiving.” The noun *todah*, “thanksgiving” (also based on the verbal root *yadah*), is used to describe thank offerings (e.g., Lev. 7:12; 2 Chron. 29:31; Amos 4:5)—often in the context of a worshipping community. In Psalm 100 the thanksgiving goes beyond an offering or sacrifice and is accompanied by joyous singing (Ps. 100:1, 2). Verse 3 emphasizes why we give thanks, for we know God to be our Creator and our Sustainer. Verse 4 connects thanksgiving again to the blessing we receive because we recognize the Lord’s goodness, mercy, and truth.

Other psalms, such as Psalm 105, catalog God’s saving deeds on behalf of Israel, His people, beginning with Abraham and Jacob (verses 5-7) and during the Exodus and the conquest (verses 23-45). “Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples!” (ESV) exclaims the author in verse 1. God’s past deeds (or actions) inspire gratitude for the present—and anticipate God’s action on behalf of His world for the future. Writes biblical scholar Amy Ekeh: “The tone of the gratitude expressed in these psalm-prayers is not transactional. . . . Neither are the prayers simply a recitation of Israel’s recollections, a walk down the memory lane of salvation history. Rather, psalms and other biblical declarations of God’s past deeds create a resonant experience in the present—the one speaking, praying, and singing about these deeds experiences them afresh.”²

GIVING THANKS ALWAYS

Thanksgiving also plays a significant role in the writings of the apostle Paul. The New Testament’s most radical and creative missionary often communicated with the members of the house churches he had established in major cities around the Roman Empire. Giving thanks for the recipient of a letter was a component part of first-century Greek letter writing styles,³ but Paul went beyond conventions when he wrote: “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess. 5:16-18). The final exhortations and greetings found in this first epistle to the Thessalonians include a number of verbal forms with similar-sounding endings in the Greek. This repetitive effect helped the reader and hearer of the letter to memorize truth in nugget form. “In sharing these maxims, Paul provided the people of

Rightfully understood, thanksgiving is a lifestyle and an attitude—something that needs to be separate from how we feel in a particular moment or how we relate to a specific challenge.

God with revealed, general truths that he expected them to memorize, constantly meditate on, and use as guiding principles, thus allowing God to shape their lives in holiness,” notes New Testament scholar Cedric Vine.⁴ Thankfulness “in everything” was right at the center of these exhortations, for they represent an important Christian value.

Paul’s epistles are full of expression of thanks—for individual co-workers like Priscilla and Aquila and their sacrificial service (Rom. 16:4); for victory over death through Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:57); for being a tool to spread the gospel (2 Cor. 2:14); for coworkers like Titus who God was using to care for churches (2 Cor. 8:16); for Jesus, God’s indescribable gift (2 Cor. 9:15); for God to enable the apostle and his readers to become partakers of the inheritance of the saints (Col. 1:12); and many more reasons.

Thankfulness in Paul’s writings seems to be disconnected from present reality. In his epistle to the Philippians Paul references his chains in Rome and his reality as a Roman prisoner (Phil. 1:12, 17). In Philippians 2:17 he uses the metaphor of a drink offering for his ministry being “poured out” on the sacrifice and faith of the Philippians, yet in spite of persecution, imprisonment, and even conflict within the church, Paul urges his readers: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God” (Phil. 4:6).

This particular text seems to suggest a lifestyle of gratefulness that affects how we relate to God, how we plead before God, and how we anticipate God’s engagement in our lives. Every prayer, every plea, every request, needs to be bathed in thanksgiving. Rightfully understood, thanksgiving is a lifestyle and an attitude—something that needs to be separate from how we feel in a particular moment or how we relate to a specific challenge.

HOME RUN

What do we see when we look in the mirror in the morning after a sleepless night worrying about a child or a friend? What do we feel when we anticipate serious challenges ahead of us? How do we cope with the pain in the life of a friend or a family member when we recognize our helplessness?

There are no easy answers to these questions. In the face of pain, disappointment, or loss, thankfulness isn’t the first attitude that comes to mind. Yet Scripture encourages us to live in an attitude of thanksgiving—regardless of our circumstances. This attitude is not based on facts and feelings, but represents a conscious decision to see God at work in our lives, in our families, and in our work—even when darkness seems to prevail.

Listen, for just a moment, to a section of a sermon preached by Ellen White on August 1, 1903, at the Helena Sanitarium Chapel: “I love the Lord. Last evening, as we met together in our sitting room for worship, it seemed to me as if the Lord Jesus were in our midst, and my heart went out in love to Him. I love Him because He first loved me. He gave His life for me. Last night I felt as if I wanted everything that hath breath to praise the Lord. It seemed to me that we should have praise seasons, and that constantly our hearts should be filled so full with thankfulness to God, that they would overflow in words of praise and deeds of love. We should cultivate a spirit of thankfulness.”⁵

Let’s extend the attitude of gratitude beyond an annual day of thanksgiving this year. This grateful stance will take some cultivating, but holds the key to living life to the full despite the storms that will gather on our individual and collective future. 🍌

¹ Martin G. Klingbeil, “Psalms 1-75,” in *Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary, Volume 6: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn. and Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2022), p. 64.

² Amy Ekeh, “Giving Thanks in All Circumstances,” *The Bible Today*, Jan. 1, 2021, p. 372.

³ Michael Patella, “In Gratitude With Paul,” *The Bible Today*, Jan. 1, 2021, pp. 363, 364.

⁴ Cedric Vine, “1 Thessalonians,” in *Andrews Bible Commentary*, ed. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez et al. (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2022), pp. 1773, 1774.

⁵ Ellen G. White manuscript 80, 1903, in *Sermons and Talks* (Silver Spring, Md.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1994), vol. 2, p. 234.

Gerald A. Klingbeil serves as associate editor of Adventist Review Ministries.

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TO VOTE OR NOT TO VOTE

That is the question.

BETTINA KRAUSE

I've never enjoyed reading articles about how Seventh-day Adventists should relate to voting. It isn't that I don't appreciate the excellent, biblically sound principles that these articles always highlight. The problem is translating principle into practice.

Consider this resolution from the third-ever General Conference Session, held in 1865:

"Resolved, That in our judgment, the act of voting when exercised in behalf of justice, humanity and right is in itself blameless, and may be at some times highly proper; but that the casting of any vote that shall strengthen the cause of such crimes as intemperance, insurrection, and slavery, we regard as highly criminal in the sight of Heaven. But we would deprecate any participation in the spirit of party strife."¹

It was the church's first official statement on voting, and this, along with counsel from Ellen White, has largely shaped how Adventists have thought and spoken about voting ever since. In the election cycle of 2022, though, what exactly does it mean to exercise my vote "in behalf of justice, humanity and right"?

Or consider Ellen White's passionate endorsement of the temperance movement of the late nineteenth century. Her comments leave us in no doubt that she *did* want church members to vote—specifically in favor of laws banning the sale of alcohol. Late one evening, at an 1881 camp meeting in Des Moines, Iowa, she got out of bed and returned to a meeting where she spoke energetically in support of a resolution that read:

"Resolved, That we express our deep interest in the temperance movement now going forward in this state; and that we instruct all our ministers to use their



For most of us, our political sympathies have, over time, become hard-baked into our identity.

influence among our churches and with the people at large to induce them to put forth every consistent effort, by personal labor, and at the ballot box, in favor of the prohibitory amendment of the Constitution, which the friends of temperance are seeking to secure.”²

The point of contention among the brethren were the words “at the ballot box,” and Mrs. White came down unequivocally on the side of retaining that phrase. Yet far from providing helpful guidance for today, this episode seems to muddy the waters even more. Does this suggest that if the issue is important enough, Adventists should try to leverage our voting power to impose our convictions on society at large? And if so, who gets to decide what issues reach this threshold of importance?

Or consider these two pieces of seemingly contradictory counsel. In an 1883 talk to young people at Battle Creek College, Ellen White said, “Have you thoughts that you dare not express, that you may one day stand upon the summit of intellectual greatness; that you may sit in deliberative and legislative councils, and help to enact laws for the nation? There is nothing wrong in these aspirations.”³

But then just six years later Mrs. White wrote an oft-quoted letter addressed to “the teachers and managers of our schools” in which she said, “We cannot with safety vote for political parties; for we do not know whom we are voting for. We cannot with safety take part in any political

schemes. . . . It is a mistake for you to link your interests with any political party, to cast your vote with them or for them.”⁴

How can a young person reasonably aspire to “sit in legislative councils” while eschewing the thumbtacks of the political process, such as voting and political parties?

A CLOSER LOOK

Clearly, as with everything, context counts. The Adventist Church’s 1865 statement on voting is probably best understood in light of the American Civil War. For Adventists of 1865, who had just endured four years of horrific trauma and bloodshed, this resolution implicitly reaffirmed the church’s long-standing abhorrence of slavery. For a church member of that era, the appeal to “justice, humanity and right” would have been *more* than clear.

Similarly, Adventist support of the temperance movement needs to be seen not as an attempt to foist our beliefs on society through legislation, but as our contribution to a major social and political movement of the time. It’s difficult for us, today, to comprehend this international, decades-long temperance effort. It brought together a disparate range of religious groups, social reformers, and political leaders. What fueled this mass movement wasn’t simply a belief that alcohol consumption was morally wrong, but also a conviction that the alcohol industry was cor-

rupting almost every aspect of society—driving crime, gambling, prostitution, domestic violence, the breakdown of the family unit, and political corruption. Many of those who campaigned for temperance were also supporters of abolition and the right of women to vote. There are good arguments to be made that Adventist support for the broad social goals of the temperance movement was a natural follow-on from our long-held opposition to slavery—a moral evil that had also infected and corrupted every facet of American society.

What about Ellen White’s apparently contradictory statements about how far Adventists should involve themselves in political practices? In a nuanced and balanced way, she calibrated her counsel to her audience and their circumstances. In the first quote she is addressing students, many of whom would soon go out into the world to make their mark. In the second she is specifically addressing those who were already employed by the church for the specific purpose of building in Adventist young people a strong spiritual foundation. These were individuals in positions of trust, whose detours into politicking could profoundly damage the young people in their care.

FAMILIAR PRINCIPLES

Absent an ability to travel back in time and experience, firsthand, the political and social world of the late 1800s and early 1900s, we need to look at Ellen White’s writings in their totality, rather than picking and choosing short snippets out of context. What we find is that the overarching thrust of her counsel through the years was to warn of the dangers of politics, while holding open a space for careful, selective involvement in social transformation through political means.

The same need for careful contextual study also applies, of course, to various biblical examples such as Nehemiah and Daniel, or the often-debated words of the apostle Paul about civil versus spiritual authority, as found, for example, in Romans 13:1-7 and elsewhere.

Thankfully, many Adventist scholars have undertaken this task through the years. When it comes to the subject of voting, their conclusions tend to broadly agree. If you search the archives for articles on this subject published in the *Adven-*

tist Review, Liberty, or Ministry, you’ll see a number of key points that consistently emerge. These can be roughly expressed as five general ideas: The act of voting isn’t inherently bad, and in fact can be an important part of our responsibility as Christians. If you do choose to vote, you should keep your opinions private, because your choice is a personal matter between you, God, and no one else. Voting comes with immense responsibility—how we vote and why we vote the way we do matters spiritually. Voting isn’t a team sport. The baggage that often comes with the act of voting, namely “a spirit of partisan strife,” can be destructive and must be avoided at all costs. And above all, don’t let the political noise around us distract us from our core mission to turn people’s hearts toward their Creator.

There are no radically new ideas here. We’ve heard versions of these principles again and again through the years, and through various election cycles.

But as I contemplate the immediate political choices before me, these excellent guidelines still don’t really address the nub of my dilemma.

A CHOICE TO MAKE

So back to this simple question: In 2022 what is a thinking, caring Seventh-day Adventist to do when it comes to the choice of voting or not? Or to paraphrase Shakespeare’s renowned equivocator, Hamlet: “To vote, or not to vote: that is the question.” Is it better to vote, and therefore implicitly be a part of a system that is currently toxic beyond measure? a system shot through with venality, powered by self-interest, and marked by extreme rhetoric from all sides?

Or is it better to step back and disengage, keeping our hearts and hands clean? So that we can wait for the time when all things will be made new and there’s no longer any need for political strategists or dealmakers, ballot boxes or campaign ads? To borrow a rather poetic turn of phrase from Adventist historian Douglas Morgan, should we be content with simply uttering “an apocalyptic lament about the Republic and its future”?²⁵

Let’s acknowledge reality. The choices before us are unpalatable on so many different levels. When I worked on Capitol Hill and visited congressional offices, I met and talked with people

who were clearly motivated by laudable goals. From the intern at the front desk to the elected representative they served, these individuals were working to shape public policy in ways they believed would benefit society at large. Yet, as a practical matter, it's almost impossible to separate the high-minded aspects of politics from the viciousness, power hunger, and mindless zealotry that are also fixtures in our current political landscape.

IT'S PERSONAL

To vote or not to vote? There are fine arguments to be made either way.⁵ And therein lies perhaps the most important point.

In the choice between voting or abstaining, there is no one-size-fits-all answer. In fact, if I dared to identify one overarching principle that should guide Adventist Church members in their choices about voting, it would be that “voting is personal.” Your choice may be different from mine, and that's OK. As editor of *Liberty* magazine—our church's 116-year-old publication focused on church-state issues—I often talk with caring, committed church members who hold diametrically opposed ideas about politics and voting.

The responsibility for grappling with my voting choices falls to no one else but me. It doesn't belong to the General Conference or any other level of church administration. It doesn't belong to my local church pastor or the people sitting next to me in the pew. Whether or how I, personally, choose to vote is an issue that belongs neither in the pulpit, nor the Sabbath School class, nor the small group Bible study.

There's a catch, though, and it's a big one. For my decision to be truly personal I also need to unharness my thinking from the almost irresistible pull of partisan identity politics. And that's a task that requires a herculean effort. For most of us, our political sympathies have, over time, become hard-baked into our identity. One recent study showed that most Americans have a reflexive, knee-jerk identification with a particular political party. It often runs so deep that it overrides all other important social identifiers such as gender, race, religion, language, and ethnicity.⁷ In other words, most of us have chosen a political team and we'll vote for it, come what may.

WHO AM I FIRST?

I can be a good Seventh-day Adventist and believe we should avoid voting and the distractions of political activism. I can also be a good Seventh-day Adventist who reads the imperatives of Micah 6:8 and other passages of Scripture and decides that I must do more than utter an “apocalyptic lament” for my country and try to reflect the values of God's kingdom as best I can within today's political realities.

I can be a good Adventist who votes Republican. I can be a good Adventist who votes Democrat or Green or Libertarian or Independent.

But unless I've prayerfully struggled with my choices, and unless I'm willing to make my political decisions subservient to my foremost identity as a child of God, then perhaps I still have work to do.

To vote or not to vote? It's our choice to make. May we deal with each other—and ourselves—with grace, humility, and patience. And may we never forget that we serve the One who is above all politics, whose kingdom will come, regardless of the choices we make at the ballot box. 🦋

¹ *Review and Herald*, May 23, 1865.

² *Review and Herald*, July 5, 1881. “Writing of it at the time, she says: ‘I dressed and found I was to speak to the point of whether our people should vote for prohibition. I told them “Yes,” and spoke twenty minutes.’—Letter 6, 1881” (Ellen G. White, *Temperance* [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1949], p. 255).

³ An address delivered before the teachers and students of Battle Creek College at the time of the General Conference Session, in Battle Creek, Michigan, Nov. 15, 1883. Published later in *Review and Herald*, Aug. 19, 1884.

⁴ This letter is reproduced in full in *Fundamentals of Christian Education* [Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1923], pp. 475–484. The actual quote comes from pp. 475 and 478.

⁵ Douglas Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic: The Public Involvement of a Major Apocalyptic Movement* (Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), p. 9.

⁶ See, for example, a recent article by Adventist attorney James Standish, “Jokers, Clowns, and Purists,” *Liberty*, July/August 2022, www.libertymagazine.org.

⁷ Milenko Martinovich, “Americans' Partisan Identities Are Stronger Than Race and Ethnicity, Stanford Scholar Finds,” *Stanford News*, Aug. 31, 2017.

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PETER N. LANDLESS ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

CHOLESTEROL . . . AGAIN?

Q: Years ago numerous health talks highlighted cholesterol. Nowadays I don't hear much about it. Is cholesterol still relevant?

A: Cholesterol became a household word during the 1980s and 1990s because of its association with atherosclerosis and disease of the heart, brain, and other blood vessels.

Cholesterol travels through the body in the blood packaged in high-density lipoprotein (HDL) or low-density lipoprotein particles (LDL), known as "good" and "bad" cholesterol respectively. People with high cholesterol have about twice the risk of heart disease as people with lower levels; and yes, heart disease and stroke are still leading causes of death around the world. So the relevance of adopting healthful-living practices to reduce cholesterol to appropriate levels is far from over. And we also now know that cholesterol is a player in the deadly processes involving risk, progression, survival, and prognosis of cancer.

Cholesterol is necessary for making vitamin D, estrogen, testosterone, and other steroid hormones and is vital for sperm development, immune-system defense, and the health of our nervous system. While all our cells contain cholesterol, cancer cells tend to have higher levels of cholesterol than normal, healthy cells; and alteration in the level of cholesterol in the blood is a common occurrence in a wide variety of cancers. We don't know whether the cholesterol "causes" cancer or if the cancer "causes" the cholesterol to accumulate in the cells, but we have some clues that have come from research conducted in the past few decades.

Cholesterol stored in cancer cells may function as a reservoir for rapid cell division and makes breakaway cells more likely to produce new colonies away from the parent tumor (i.e., metastasis). In a manner of speaking, cholesterol is "hijacked" in the malignant process for the development,

survival, progression, and metastasis of cancerous cells. In most cases tissue from tumors shows an increase in the uptake receptors for LDL cholesterol, which may then serve as a pipeline for new cholesterol to support rapid growth in the cancer cells. So could it be that a lifestyle that promotes high levels of LDL, or "bad" cholesterol, may also be fueling the development of cancers and cancer metastasis?

It's now known that alteration of the way cholesterol is handled in cancer cells can hamper or facilitate the response to anti-cancer therapies. Increased cholesterol levels are associated with higher cancer incidence, and cholesterol-lowering drugs (e.g., statins) may reduce the risk of dying

The relevance of adopting healthful-living practices to reduce cholesterol to appropriate levels is far from over.

from certain cancers, such as breast, prostate, and colorectal. Yet some cancers aren't affected by blood cholesterol levels, and cholesterol-lowering drugs themselves may increase cancer risk. So just looking for medication to "fix" the cholesterol may not be the answer.

There's robust evidence that a healthful lifestyle using a plant-based diet of whole foods, adequate exercise, rest, stress management, and trust in God makes a lot of sense in reducing the risk of cancer as well as other leading threats to our health.

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



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GIVING THANKS

It's not only about food and fun, it's also a time to reach out and give back.

Our Thanksgiving is approaching. Will it be as it has been in many instances, a thanksgiving to ourselves? Or will it be a thanksgiving to God? Our Thanksgivings may be made seasons of great profit to our own souls as well as to others, if we improve this opportunity to remember the poor among us. God has placed His poor in our midst, and he identifies his interest with them. Those who for Christ's sake relieve their necessities thus show that they would gladly do the same for Jesus; but as they cannot manifest their love to Jesus in person, they do their acts of sympathy, their deeds of love and beneficence, to Him in the person of His saints. . . .

TIME TO LOOK AROUND

But these are the degraded poor, bearing the present penalty for their evil course, preparatory to the final judgment of God, and the reward they will receive according as their deeds have been. While He bears long with

the perversity and iniquity of those who profess to be Christians, but who are so only in name, God never forgets, and He will punish their transgressions and visit their iniquities. There are poor among us who have done the best they could; but misfortune and sickness seem to be their lot. Their homes are not attractive because they cannot make them so. They have no money to indulge in the gratification of luxuries or those things their tastes desire. The plain necessities of life are all they can afford. There are many such ones to whom it is exceedingly galling to be obliged to depend on charity in the least sense. But, brethren and sisters, God has placed these very ones in our midst to test and prove us, to keep our dispositions Christlike. God withholds nothing from us; we are the recipients of His mercies. Day by day and hour by hour, God is giving to us generously; and shall we for one moment look down upon the poor as though in God's sight

we were better than they? God forbid! Never let the hungry cry of the destitute and afflicted ones come up to God against us; for every tear and every pressure of suffering want bears a cry up to heaven—a grave charge upon some one of God’s favored ones.

There are a hundred ways that can be devised to help the poor in so delicate a manner as to make them feel they are doing us a favor by receiving our gifts and sympathy. We are to remember that it is more blessed to give than to receive. The attentions of our brethren are most liberal to those whom they wish to honor, and whose respect they desire, but who do not need their help at all. Custom and fashion say, Give to those who will give to you; but this is not the Bible rule of giving. The Word of God declares against this way of gratifying self in thus bestowing our gifts, and says, “He that giveth to the rich shall surely come to want.”

SUGGESTED WAYS TO TRULY HELP OTHERS

Now a season is coming when we shall have our principles tested. Let us begin to think what we can do for God’s needy ones. We can make them through ourselves the recipients of God’s blessings. Think what widow, what orphan, what poor family you can relieve, not in a way to make a great parade about the matter, but be as a channel through which the Lord’s substance shall flow as a blessing to His poor. As you look upon your own children, consider how many there are just as good and noble who have but little to cheer or make them glad. They may be orphans, with no home, no father, no mother, subject to temptations and influences calculated to lead them to ruin when these days of festivity occur. Who has a care for these homeless ones? Whose doors are open to them? Let the widow and the orphan be remembered.

But this does not embrace all your duty. Make an offering to your best Friend; acknowledge His bounties; show your gratitude for His favors; bring a thank-offering to God. . . . Brethren and sisters, eat a plain dinner on Thanksgiving day, and with the money you would spend in extras with which to indulge the appetite, make a thank offering to God. . . .

WHAT A BLESSING IT IS TO SHARE!

Everything seems to have degenerated into mixing the spurious with the genuine. Thanksgiving is almost entirely perverted. Instead of

There are a hundred ways that can be devised to help the poor in so delicate a manner as to make them feel they are doing us a favor by receiving our gifts and sympathy.

being a day of solemn gladness and gratitude to God, it has become a day of jollification, self-indulgence, and gluttony. Self interposes for attention, for gratification, for indulgence. This is a thanksgiving and oblation made to self to the forgetfulness of God and all His benefits to us. Let nothing interpose to detract glory from God.

How much good might be done if we would make a right use of our associations with one another! Every one who has received of the heavenly benefits is under obligation to shed some light on the pathway of others. In all our associations we are to be witnesses for Christ. Then all those who truly love God will cease their idolatry of self. Let this be the case in the coming Thanksgiving. Employ your powers to a better purpose than in cooking a variety of food with which to gratify your appetites. Employ that time in becoming missionaries for God’s cause, seeking how much you can do to turn the attention from self to the Lord our Creator. Gather up the offerings. Set the mind to running in a different channel than has been your custom. Let your works correspond with your faith. See what you can do toward turning your thoughts heavenward in place of upon earthly appetite and selfish indulgence. Wisely improve your powers in gathering up the smaller and larger offerings for the Master, and thus present a true thanksgiving to God. Make the most of your social position and influence to advance the interests of God’s cause in the earth. There have been so few true Thanksgivings to God! Everything has been turned from God and heaven to earth; and now let us make every effort in our power to turn the mind back to God, away from earth, away from selfish interests, and away from self-serving. We know but little of the experience of self-denial. We must know more of it, weaving benevolence into our daily experience. 🍂

Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry. This excerpt is taken from the *Review and Herald*, November 18, 1884.

Want to Have a Seating Problem at Sabbath School?

Could you imagine the biggest complaint at your church being, "I can't get a seat at our Bible study?" What would it be like if you had to take seat reservations at your Sabbath School so that your large group of visitors could even get in? Roy Ice has discovered how to do just that and more, and he and his team would love to share how God can do the same thing with your community by starting a Bible Lab.

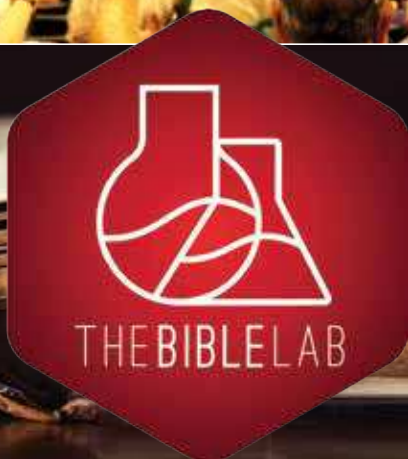
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OUR PLACE IN THE GARDEN

At the front of my house, right under our bedroom window, is a small flower bed. We moved into this house in August, but instead of planting bulbs in the fall, I decided to heed advice given to me many years before: Wait a year before doing any planting or digging in a new yard. Until you've been through an entire cycle of seasons, you have no idea what's hiding under the soil, ready to make an appearance when it's time.

The following spring I waited with great anticipation to see what would reveal itself in my yard. The first green shoots were clearly daffodil stems; within a few days they formed a beautiful yellow-and-white row against the house.

A few weeks later the daffodils were starting to look a little frail, but my attention was now drawn to a new row of green popping up in front of them. Eventually I was able to identify them as hyacinths. As the daffodils began to fade for the season, the hyacinths were just starting to show their full colors—lovely pinks and purples that practically glowed in the spring sunshine.

I'm not a gardener, nor am I a botanist, so I can't identify all the plants that appeared there; but from March until midsummer there was constant color and texture against the front of the house. Each time one row grew tired and began to wilt, another row of brand-new growth appeared in front of it. Every day when I came home from work it made me smile to see what was showcased in my flower bed.

I don't know who it was, but some previous resident of our home planned that flower bed perfectly. They knew exactly

what to plant and in what order to ensure that little spot was more than just a patch of dirt.

And for their part, the plants knew exactly what to do. The short ground-cover plants didn't bloom early. If they had, they would have choked the other flowers. The hyacinths waited until the daffodils were fading to make their appearance, and the daffodils didn't try to compete with their neighbors. Each one did their best living when the time was right, pushing through and showing up just when they were meant to. None of them outshone another; they each played a part in making that flower bed shine.

Someone has planned the flower bed of our communities perfectly too. The Master Gardener knows exactly whom to plant and in what order to ensure each community is more than just a patch of dirt. He has planted each of us to serve a specific purpose and play a unique part in making our communities shine.

And for our part, we know exactly what to do: simply follow where He leads and seek His guidance. If we do, we won't choke each other or compete—we'll do our best living when the time is right, pushing through and showing up just when we're meant to.

*"God's purpose [for you] . . . is wider, deeper, higher, than [your] restricted vision has comprehended."**

* Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1903), p. 262.

Becky St. Clair is a freelance writer living in California with her husband and three children. She has a decade of experience in public relations for the church, and currently writes and copyedits for various church entities around the world.

THE FAITH-FULL LIFE
BECKY ST. CLAIR



THE MASTER GARDENER HAS PLANTED EACH OF US TO SERVE A SPECIFIC PURPOSE AND PLAY A UNIQUE PART IN MAKING OUR COMMUNITIES SHINE.



COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

Calvin Kim stands with the young woman rescued from the streets of Peru.

MIRACLES HAPPEN AT ASI

*God orchestrated
a divine appointment.*

At an Adventist-laymen's Services and Industries (ASi) event not long ago, I heard a gentleman named Paul share a powerful testimony of how God led him to start a ministry in Peru almost 20 years ago.

He was on a short-term mission trip, and if you've ever been to a developing country, you might be familiar with street children who beg from tourists. A little girl approached Paul and asked him for money. He was aware that many of these children are taught to be professional beggars, used by manipulative

parents to tug on sympathetic heartstrings.

He inquired about the little girl's mother. She quickly replied, "I don't have a mother." Paul wasn't quite sure he believed her. He was impressed with her quick comeback, though. He responded immediately, "Why don't you come home and live with me?" Without missing a beat, the little girl replied, "Before she died, my mother told me never to go anywhere with strangers." Paul and his accompanying friend began laughing a little bit. The girl seemed to have a comeback for every question he asked her.

CALVIN KIM

Tears formed in the little girl's eyes and threatened to spill down her cheeks. Her lips quivered. Paul's heart sank as the reality became clear. He and his friend were laughing at a little girl who had lost her mother and lived with her older sister on the streets of Peru.

A DIVINE APPOINTMENT

This brief encounter was a defining moment in Paul's life. On that trip he purchased a home in Peru and found a bilingual family willing to live there and take care of the two little girls. He eventually adopted the girls as his own children. This was the start of Poppy's House in Iquitos, Peru, and the orphanage has touched countless lives over the years as a result of his sacrifice.

I wish I could tell you that everything was all right for the little girl after he rescued her and her sister from the streets. When I called Paul, I could hear the pain and heartache in his voice as he shared with me the challenges and struggles that she faced as she grew up. Despite the blessings she received, she had no interest in spiritual things and made poor choices that left lasting effects.

I recently spoke for the Friday evening plenary session at the ASi convention in Orlando, Florida. My message was titled "One Life to Live. One Life to Give." It was framed under the implication that life is fragile and fleeting. In light of what is truly important, how do we want to live our lives? I shared what God is doing in my life as I seek to win souls for His kingdom.

After the presentation I went to the exhibit hall. An excited young woman approached and thanked me profusely for the message. She asked to take a picture with me. She had no idea who I was, except that I had just shared the evening message, and I had no idea who she was! As we visited, her mother appeared and introduced herself. Imagine my surprise to learn that her husband was Paul and that the young woman to whom I was speaking was the little girl from Peru! I was in total awe of God's goodness. He not only allowed me to cross paths with the girl whose story I had heard, but used my testimony to bring revival to her life.

COOPERATING AND COLLABORATING

Soon after, I ran into Paul. He told me that earlier that evening his daughter had no interest

"In light of what is truly important, how do we want to live our lives?"

in participating in the evening worship. She wanted to leave, but he had encouraged her to stay and listen to the message. The Holy Spirit spoke to her heart in a special way, and Paul shared that his daughter cried through much of the message.

This providential encounter with Paul's adopted daughter was the highlight of my time at ASi National. It really is what ASi is all about. God is using His children to cooperate and collaborate together with Him in this most grand work of saving souls. The apostle Paul says, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase" (1 Cor. 3:6). Ironically, my friend's name is Paul, too. God used him to plant the seeds. Like Apollos, I had the privilege of adding water. But it is ultimately God who gives the increase!

I'm so thankful that God has called you and me to be collaborators with Him. Why has He called us to this work? So that we can experience and share in "the joy of Christ in souls redeemed." My friend's daughter still faces many challenges, but at ASi we saw that God is doing everything He can to reach His child. Her heart is still responsive to His love! Paul and I cling to the wonderful promise found in Philippians 1:6: "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."

If you want to be inspired for soul winning, I encourage you to attend a regional or national ASi convention. God is doing incredible things in the lives of His people. 🍀

* Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900, 1941), p. 374.

Calvin Kim is a dentist from Olympia, Washington.



ANDREI67 / ISTOCK / GETTYIMAGESPLUS

I SAW GOD'S HAND

*The miracle
happened at sea.*

I attended my first ASi convention in Spokane, Washington, in 1995. During the convention I met Craig Scott and Shane St. Clair, who had just started a new ministry, Search for One (SFO). They wanted to provide medical and dental help to the republic of Kiribati, located between Fiji to the south and the Marshall Islands to the north.

Kiribati (pronounced kir-i-bus) is comprised of three island groups: the Line Islands on the east, the Phoenix Islands in the middle, and the Gilbert Islands to the west. The country extends for almost 2,000 miles in the equatorial Pacific, with very little landmass and lots of ocean.

Of the 23 inhabited islands, the vast majority of the population live on the Gilbert Islands, and SFO has focused its efforts there.

DIRE NEED

I love sailing. When I heard about the opportunity to be a boat captain and host family in this very remote part of the South Pacific, it did not take me long to volunteer. I presented my plan and the exciting mission opportunity to my family. We sold our vehicles, moved our things to storage, and prepared to start the medical mission program.

One day after we arrived, we headed out with a construction team to Abemama, one of the atolls in the Gilbert Islands. The Adventist boarding academy's cafeteria roof needed repair. Kauma (pronounced cow-ma) Adventist School (KAS) boards 300-500 students. More than 90 percent are non-Adventist when they arrive, but many convert to Adventism by the time they leave. The school is one of the greatest evangelistic tools in the country.

When we arrived at the beginning of the school year, we found that the whole island was running out of supplies, including the school. Local freight boats had not delivered food or other supplies for weeks, because of high winds. Three hundred fifty students were arriving, and there was not enough food to feed them.

Takamati was the boys' dean and a longtime supporter of SFO. An excellent seaman, he knew the passageways in and out of the various island lagoons. We hatched a plan to

take a boat to Tarawa (the main island) and bring back food and supplies for the school.

In a day's time we gathered enough fuel (also in very short supply) to sail to Tarawa. We left about 5:00 p.m. Wednesday evening and had a quick, uneventful trip, sailing with winds and currents and arriving about 5:00 a.m. Thursday morning. Mission headquarters had food and supplies ready to be sent back to the school. Young men at the mission office loaded the boat with several thousand pounds of rice, flour, sugar, and other staples. By 5:00 p.m. Thursday we were back on the ocean for the return trip to Abemama.

A ROUGH TRIP

It did not take us long to realize that it was going to be a long, rough trip. The wind, waves, and current were against us. Providentially, we had loaded twice the amount of fuel needed for the trip. We were both experienced seamen and knew our route well.

As we journeyed into the night, we checked our GPS position and added fuel to the running tank every three hours. It became apparent that even with the extra fuel, we would need to make faster progress to reach our destination. By midday Friday I made a satellite call to the mission office. I told them we were running late and were low on fuel. The mission office quickly relayed the message to Barnabas, the high school principal. At 3:00 p.m. Friday afternoon he rang the emergency school bell. This summoned all the students and staff to the chapel for a special prayer service for us on the open ocean.

Up to this point we had not seen any improvement in the wind or waves despite our fervent prayers and those ascending from Kauma. The waves were in excess of 25 feet. Our 26-foot boat felt very small. We had prayed that God would calm the wind and waves for us, but that had not happened.

WITNESSING A MIRACLE

At exactly 3:00 p.m., while the students and staff were praying, the outboard motor quit. We had not transferred fuel to the running tank soon enough. I transferred fuel, and Takamati checked the GPS. I went to the back of the boat to start the outboard motor, and with my first hefty pull on the rope it ripped out of my hands. The motor

“We checked our GPS position and added fuel to the running tank every three hours.”

would not turn over. With no power we were going three knots in the wrong direction. I tried to start the engine again. A big wave picked up the back panel of the boat and brought it down hard on my face. Fortunately, it didn't knock me overboard, but I had a large gash on my forehead.

I called to Takamati, who was now in the boat's cabin bailing water. Blood was streaming down my face. He handed me a rag and went to the back of the boat to attempt to start the engine. The first several pulls were ripped out of his hands too. Miraculously, the boat started.

We were about 27 miles from the lagoon. The harsh winds had been blowing salt water in my eyes for so long that I couldn't see the compass anymore. Takamati took over, and I went below and lay down on rice bags to rest a little. Before I knew it, Takamati called me up to transfer fuel. It was dark, and I asked what time it was—9:00 p.m. We were near the lagoon. I quickly transferred the very last of the fuel to the engine.

I calculated the time and distance from our previous fuel transfer. This tank ran twice as long as during any other part of the trip, and we had traveled three times the distance. I asked Takamati if the weather had improved. He said no, it was worse. It was a clear miracle. As we traversed the lagoon we contemplated what we had just witnessed.

The best part was sharing the experience with the students and staff who had been praying for us at the hour of our worst extremity. In true missionary spirit KAS shared their valuable supplies with other schools on the island that had the same needs.

God still performs miracles! We were fortunate to see His hand at work that day. 🍀

Gary Morgan is the president of ASI Northwest..

HIS Impact On Me

Finding Love



Dalariyn

For a young teenager who was left to raise her four younger siblings, encountering a relationship with God required the appropriate occasion. Holbrook Indian School (HIS) student, Dalariyn, was at the Arizona camp meeting for a week as part of HIS summer program when she felt God's presence and heard his voice speaking to her.

When Dalariyn left school to live with her guardians for the summer, Dalariyn said for those two weeks, she "gave up on everything." "I questioned if God was real, why is this happening to me?" Realizing that being at home was not helping her mental health, Dalariyn went to the HIS Summer Experience program. For the first week of that experience, Dalariyn worked with horses during horse camp. Here she learned the fundamentals of relating to and connecting with horses, techniques that horse trainer Jaylin Clayton says help to enhance our relationships with others.

The following week, Dalariyn traveled with other students to the Arizona camp meeting at Camp Yavapines campgrounds. It was her first time attending a camp meeting, and by the time she was here, Dalariyn says, "I literally lost all faith."

As she listened to the messages on Biblical vs. worldly love on one particular night, something (or someone) spoke to her. "I had a big hole in my heart I filled with the wrong things over and over." Dalariyn had not been given any demonstration of true love.

"That night, it felt like a lot of stuff was lifted off of my shoulders. That's when I decided I wanted to get baptized and give my life to God." Dalariyn was baptized later in the week on Sabbath by Pastor Manny Cruz.

You can help other students like Dalariyn find God's love, despite their circumstances. To watch Dalariyn's full story, or to make a gift, visit HolbrookIndianSchool.org/summer-experience.

TIME TO LOVE

Just rest, Jill.” Inwardly I groaned. *How often did I need to hear that reminder?* Recently it seemed to come from every angle. Coworkers, friends, family. “Jilly, do you think you could rest? Why don’t you take time for yourself?”

My response was always the same: a polite nod, with an even politer smile. The words, polished and smoothed, came out the same. “That’s great advice. I’ll look into it.”

The truth was that if I had had time I’d have taken it already. *Who has time to rest? to do anything besides work?*

And so the days, weeks, months, and years slipped by. *Focus, Jill.* Yet it became harder for the mind to control the body. And still the treadmill continued: *Just one more email. Another voicemail to answer. One last contract to write. Then I’ll rest.*

The truth was that I felt trapped. No matter how much I accomplished, there was always more to do. No matter how much I delegated, the next task appeared, staring me in the face. *How could I push it aside and rest?*

I prayed about it, but no answer seemed to appear. Greg and I talked, but no ready solution emerged. I was stuck. Depression began to settle over me like a fog.

Sometimes God intervenes in our lives in the least-expected way. Recently Greg and I went to Mackinac Island in Michigan for our twentieth wedding anniversary. It was our “island in time.” No work calls. Limited emails and texts. There was time to close my eyes and feel the sun on

my face. To lean back in the chair and talk with Greg, listening to the seagulls overhead and the waves on the shore. Time to find out what matters most.

Love. When everything distills down, that’s what really matters.

Love God. Sit and listen for His voice, speaking through the pages of His Word. Focus on who He is and what He’s done in your life. Take time to reflect on His goodness.

Love yourself. Forgive yourself. Or better put, let go of your inability to measure up to your own expectations of yourself. Let God be God. Learn to bask in who He thinks you are. Breathe that in. Allow yourself to accept His view of you.

Love others. God places people in our path for a purpose. Sometimes it’s to catch us when we fall. Or to bring joy and color to life. Whatever the reason, take time to savor those friendships, to be fully present in each moment.

Those three loves are the sum of life. And I’m beginning to discover the joy in those moments. Not the rushed, frantic moments, but the intentional ones. The savored moments, the present moments, the moments to love.

Work will always be here, but life won’t be. Take time to love, for in that moment comes life. 🍀

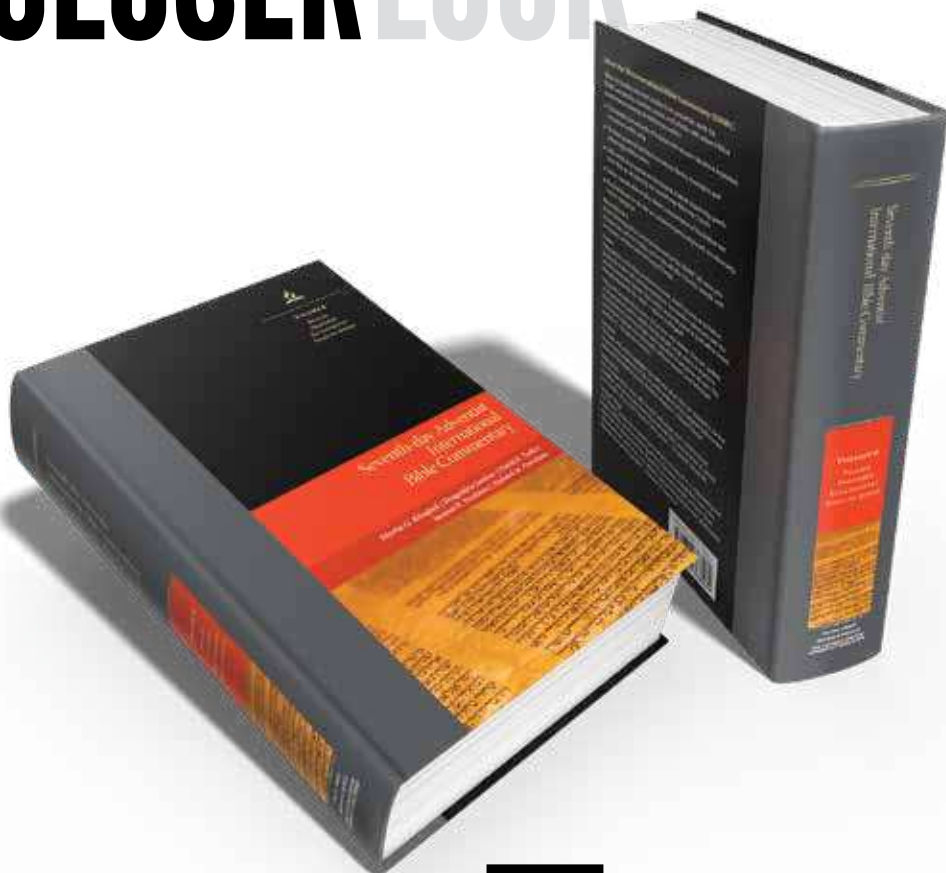
Jill Morikone is vice president and chief operations officer for Three Angels Broadcasting Network (3ABN), a supporting Adventist television network. She and her husband, Greg, live in southern Illinois and enjoy ministering together for Jesus.

JOURNEYS
WITH JESUS
JILL
MORIKONE



WHO HAS TIME
TO REST?
TO DO ANYTHING
BESIDES WORK?

CLOSER LOOK



Scripture Lies at the Heart of Adventism

Martin G. Klingbeil, Dragoslava Santrac, David R. Tasker, Jacques B. Doukhan, and Richard M. Davidson, *Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary: Volume 6: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn./Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2022), xxix + 1391 pages, hardcover. US\$59.99, available on AdventistBookCenter.com. Reviewed by Gerald A. Klingbeil, associate editor, Adventist Review Ministries.

The appearance of the first volume of the new *Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary* (SDAIBC) series represents an important moment in Adventist biblical scholarship, and, following soon after the publication of the two-volume *Andrews Bible Commentary* (2020, 2022), highlights the significant contribution of dozens of Adventist Bible scholars hailing from all corners of the world and representing a global church community.

Many years in the making and nearly 70 years after the publication of the original *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (1953-1957), the SDAIBC fills an important need for a growing church engaged in the serious and faith-based study of the biblical text. It takes into account new archaeological, historical, textual, cultural, and chronological insights and discoveries that help illuminate and enrich our reading of Scripture. Furthermore, while the original Adventist Bible Commentary set featured an overwhelming major-

ity of North American Bible scholars, the SDAIBC reflects more closely a vibrant and growing international faith community sensitive to cultural differences, yet united in its high view of Scripture. Contributors for volume 6 hailed from Germany, Serbia, Australia, France, and the United States.

The fact that the first full volume published after the appearance of the initial single commentary on Genesis (in 2016) focuses on Israel's hymns and wisdom literature may be accidental, yet it's also a welcome reminder that personal piety and practical Christianity are key elements of God's Word.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SDAIBC

The volume contains a short foreword of the editors (pp. vii, viii) describing the twofold audiences the new series seeks to engage, namely pastors, seminary students, and theologians and Bible teachers, as well as nonspecialists seeking a deeper understanding of the biblical text. This is followed by a brief "How to Read the SDAIBC" section (pp. ix, x), a useful glossary of technical terminology (pp. xi-xix), a list of Hebrew grammar terms (p. xx), a list of abbreviations (pp. xxi-xxvii), and a table showing the utilized transliteration scheme for Hebrew and Greek letters (pp. xxviii, xxix).

The commentary for each biblical book follows general introductory categories (e.g., author, time, place, situation, genre, literary structure, theology, and intertextual use in later biblical books), and concludes with a selected bibliography annotated by the author of the particular commentary.

Half of this volume of the SDAIBC (c. 700 pages) is dedicated to the commentary on the Psalms, authored by two scholars (Martin Klingbeil [Pss. 1-75] and Dragoslava Santrac [Pss. 76-150]).* As noted by the two authors, this division is based, not on an internal structure in the book of Psalms, but the length of Israel's hymnal and the often-limited ability of scholars to carve out enough time for research and writing. The commentary for each psalm (or chapter in the case of the other books that form part of volume 6) includes a concise summary statement highlighting the most important ideas, structural devices, and theological themes, followed by two parallel versions of the biblical text (NKJV and ESV) organized in clearly demarcated sections. Next come relevant and more specific exegetical discussions.

The SDAIBC contains a number of images and excursuses, as, for example, a seal impression found in 2009 in Jerusalem (though only correctly identified in 2015) that bears the name of King Hezekiah (p. 294) and has significance in the scholarly debate about the winged sun disk visible on the seal impression and its relationship to the use of sun metaphors in Scripture. Important excursuses include a discussion of form criticism (pp. 15-17), a review of the distinct metaphors of God used in the Psalms (p. 21), a discussion of the messianic perspective of Proverbs 8 (pp. 774, 775), and a long and helpful excursus reviewing the flora of the Song of Songs (pp. 1180-1195), to mention just a few.

USING THE SDAIBC

Many commentary pages include one or more footnotes, offering references or more technical explanations of linguistic details, and engaging in the important task of entering into a conversation with other scholars and opinions. These conversations are not evenly spread out in the volume—possibly a reflection of how different authors perceived the assignments given to them. More evenness in this aspect may have been a good idea and may be considered for future volumes.

The first complete volume of the SDAIBC offers both specialists and nonspecialists copious material for reflections and further research. It represents the best of Adventist biblical scholarship engaging faithfully with the text and world of Scripture and reminds the attentive reader of the fact that there is always more to discover when we dig deeply into God's Word. Scholars will sorely miss a number of relevant indices (such as biblical and extrabiblical text references, modern authors cited, etc.)—which may, perhaps, appear in the final volume of the set, even though that may not be the best location. Others will quibble with an interpretation of a particular detail or would wish for more in-depth discussion of a particular text or chapter (as I did for the commentary on Psalm 119). All will be grateful to the individual authors and the editorial team led by Jacques Doukhan for a significant tool that invites us back to look and relook at Scripture and that challenges us to keep reading and listening to the Word to finally connect to the living Word offering us the peace of God that truly transcends all understanding (cf. Phil. 4:7).[♣]

* Full disclosure: Psalm specialist Martin Klingbeil is my brother.

ON BEING GRATEFUL

The concept of gratitude is on the minds of many, particularly during this holiday season. But the practice of gratitude—which is really a daily moment of reflecting and giving thanks—has become a topic that even mental health experts advocate for as a form of self-care. Taking a moment to give thanks is good for the soul. During this time of year when being thankful makes many conversational rounds, we asked staff members from the Chesapeake Conference and Columbia Union Conference to tell us about their thoughts on gratitude and what they are most thankful for at present. We hope reading their words will inspire you to stop for even the smallest things, and give thanks to our Creator.—*Editors.*

Learning about God’s love and generosity inspires me to emulate Jesus Christ by loving Him and living generosity. I am so grateful for God’s creative love, salvation, sense of purpose, and inspiration to serve others.

SEAN ROBINSON

During the most difficult times of life, it is sometimes difficult to feel grateful. However, once I get through the trial, I have always been able to look back and see how, even though I couldn’t see it at the time, God was taking care of me and carrying me through and on to better things. As time has passed and I have experienced His ways more and more, I can now practice gratitude *during* the trial because I know that I can trust Him to provide for all my needs. I am eternally grateful for a God who loves me with everlasting love and for my family.

JANESTA WALKER

**I can now practice gratitude
during the trial because I know
that I can trust Him to provide
for all my needs.**

The practice of gratitude in the Christian life reminds us that life is a gift. God’s gift to us began with His detailed beauty of creation and extended to the sacrificial gift of His Son, Jesus. Because of this amazing gift, we have been gifted with grace and mercy, as well as the gift of salvation. Gratitude is essential to our well-being; if you are never grateful, you can become bitter and disillusioned, changing your outlook on life. God’s provision and love for us all came before we knew His name or understood a glimpse of the magnitude of His love. I am grateful because although I may not fully understand the big picture for my life, my God is in control of everything!

I am most grateful for people—family, surrogate family, friends, strangers. I learn from everyone I encounter: sometimes I learn things that can uplift me, and sometimes I learn things that are not needed in my life. For each person God has allowed to impact my life, there have been lessons to grow me positively. I look at Joseph and his many encounters, and to my amazement, Joseph through the storms experienced extreme growth. Instead of becoming bitter and manifesting hurt and pain, he realized God’s plan for his life was bigger. I focused on Joseph because each of these four groups I am grateful for hurt Joseph in some way



and blessed Joseph as well. Everyone isn't perfect, but God can use people to bring about some blessing on the path of life.

VANESSA WAITE

I believe it's important [to give thanks], because we go through life, and sometimes it can be hard, discouraging, and emotional, but if we take the time to reflect on the blessings—whether great or small—we are reminded of God's love for us. Gratitude or counting our blessings provides peace and gives us the strength to push through difficult times and trust God. That way our smiles and joy can be our testimony. I am most grateful for my relationship with God. I can go to Him with anything, and He will listen and direct my path. It is the most freeing and comforting feeling.

H. CANDACE NURSE

I believe that gratitude keeps you aware of all the blessings you have, and therefore your perspective of life changes: you are happy, and depression goes away. If we are grateful, we will be happy Christians, and it will be easier to show Jesus through our lives. Right now I'm very thankful for my family.

DOMITILA ROSETTE



THANKFUL FOR CARING PEOPLE

As we enter November and draw close to Thanksgiving, we feel nudged to count our blessings, to ponder the things we're thankful for, and to praise God for His goodness and care.

This year, however, life seems different. We're inundated with images of war, poverty, natural calamities—and very angry people. None of this is new, but somehow we seem to be experiencing a greater intensity of events, more fear for the future, and increased concern regarding rapid change.

According to the USDA, more than 34 million people in the United States, including some 9 million children, are food insecure.

The Feeding America website states that “every community in the country is home to families who face hunger,” and in 2021 alone, about 53 million people sought help from community food programs.¹

The growing number of displaced people is also overwhelming to consider. As of May 2022, 100 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide largely because of conflicts and human rights violations.

Natural disasters are regular occurrences, and in the first half of 2022 have mostly been weather-related. “Tornadoes in the U.S. caused billions in damage, parts of eastern coastal Australia were submerged by floods, and southern Europe struggled with extreme heat, wildfires and drought.”²

Also disturbing is rising anger and hate, attributed by some to racism, coronavirus response, and “American politicians [stoking] voter anger for their own electoral advantage.”³

Considering all this, can we still find blessings to be thankful for? Absolutely we can! One thing that rises to the top is caring people. Those who set aside per-

sonal convenience and prioritize helping others. Countless large organizations worldwide are daily fighting food insecurity and aiding individuals affected by natural and other disasters, including ADRA and Adventist Community Services. Local church programs are also involved.

In my own small local church in Meridian, Idaho, members Diana and Gary Wyland head an active community service ministry. Together with numerous church volunteers and food donations from the local food bank and restaurants, the Wylands—who both hold full-time jobs—feed about 130 homeless people every month. They and their team also provide food staples through the church's food pantry to some 70 community families, or 250 individuals. And they don't stop there. The group provides adult and children's clothing to those in need, rides to the hospital, the painting and cleaning of homes, and other assistance.

“We're seeing the needs increase,” says Diana, who joined the Adventist Church only four years ago. “Inflation is driving more people to seek various types of assistance to fight off expenses or endure stretches of joblessness.”

As we enjoy the Thanksgiving season with family and friends, eating pumpkin pie and tofu turkey, let's remember those on the front lines of the war on poverty and destruction and despair and be thankful for the help and hope they provide. What would the world be like without them? ▀

¹ <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/food-insecurity>

² <https://www.munichre.com/en/company/media-relations/media-information-and-corporate-news/media-information/2022/natural-disaster-figures-first-half-2022.html>

³ <https://theconversation.com/angry-americans-how-political-rage-helps-campaigns-but-hurts-democracy-145819>

Sandra Blackmer is an assistant editor of *Adventist Review*.

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FIND BLESSINGS TO
BE THANKFUL FOR?
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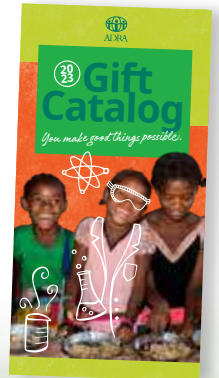
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