Under the African Sun
Thousands gather for World Council of Churches Eighth Assembly

Single Like Me
Life-and-death Matters
World Church Leaders Grapple With Controversy
President’s Actions Scrutinized by Administrative Committee

BY CARLOS MEDLEY, news editor for the Adventist Review

FRIDAY, JANUARY 29

On March 1, Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders and laypersons from around the world will gather in Silver Spring, Maryland, to evaluate allegations surrounding General Conference president Robert S. Folkenberg, the church’s highest officer.

An issue are concerns about Folkenberg’s business relationship with James Moore, an entrepreneur from Sacramento, California, who filed an $8 million lawsuit on August 21, 1998, in California Superior Court against Folkenberg, the General Conference Corporation, the Inter-American Division, attorney Walter Carson, and accountant Ben Kochenower. The papers were not served until late December.

Though named in the lawsuit, the General Conference Corporation has never had any dealing with Moore. Attorneys for the church regard the suit as frivolous and without merit. The Inter-American Division cut off all ties with Moore in 1989. In 1987, he was convicted of felony grand theft in an unrelated case.

As the church’s attorney Phil Hiroshima of Hiroshima, Jacobs, Roth & Lewis of Sacramento, California, prepared to defend the General Conference Corporation and the Inter-American Division, he discovered information that raised significant ecclesiastical concerns about Folkenberg’s dealings with Moore. Hiroshima brought these concerns to the attention of church officials. In a public statement to the General Conference staff on January 21, Folkenberg acknowledged that Moore had accused him of breaching his fiduciary responsibilities toward the church.

Meeting at the Hyatt Hotel in Herndon, Virginia, on Wednesday, January 27, the General Conference Administrative Committee (ADCOM) deliberated for about 10 hours and voted to call a meeting of the 268-member General Conference Executive Committee at the earliest opportunity to review issues. Church officials say the issue must be brought before the Executive Committee because it is the only body that can make decisions affecting General Conference elected leadership between international sessions every five years.

In an exclusive January 29 phone conversation with Adventist Review editor William Johnsson, Folkenberg expressed concerns about news releases from church sources and in the public press that have left the impression that his business relationship with Moore brought him personal gain. Folkenberg maintains that he has not benefitted personally from his association with Moore.

Folkenberg further indicated that he...
has not yet decided whether he will appear at the March 1 meeting of the Executive Committee to give his perspective.

The referral action came after ADCOM received a report from a 19-member Special A d H oc Group chaired by Niels-Erik Andreasen, Andrews University president. The committee was appointed on January 13 to investigate allegations made against Folkenberg. The group (see accompanying sidebar) represented the church’s international membership and included three laypersons, three General Conference departmental directors, one administrator from the North American Division, a pastor, an editor, an educator, two union presidents from North America, an associate secretary of the world church, three General Conference vice presidents, and three presidents of world divisions of the church.

The Special A d H oc Group was mandated to:

- Receive and evaluate information relating to issues that have come to light as a result of allegations made against Folkenberg;
- Identify pertinent issues that potentially affect the world church;
- Determine if the issues were of such a nature as to warrant further consideration and/or action;
- Prepare a report with any appropriate recommendations.

The A d H oc Group deliberated for more than 25 hours on January 25 and 26. After a lengthy discussion to establish a process deemed fair by all parties, attorney Hiroshima gave a summary of the documents and their significance, with Folkenberg in attendance. Four hours of close questioning of Hiroshima followed. Late in the day Monday, Folkenberg’s attorney, James Prochnow of the Patton Boggs law firm in Denver, Colorado, made a presentation and Folkenberg himself addressed the group.

The next day the group met without attorneys to discuss and evaluate the documents and presentations and to prepare recommendations. (See next page.)
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So I will share with you my take on the matter involving Elder Robert S. Folkenberg, president of the General Conference. During the last week or so, articles have appeared in the public press and from private Adventist sources. This week I have been given access to thousands of pages of documents and heard statements as I served on the special committee set up by the church to get at the facts. I can tell you that much of what you may have read or heard is inaccurate, and in some cases massively inaccurate. Quotations from telephone conversations have been strung together without consideration of context and created a sinister impression. The shaping of reports has suggested that Folkenberg used the office of General Conference president to line his pockets.

The Ad Hoc Group set up to examine the evidence found no suggestion of immoral conduct, malfeasance, or denial of the fundamental beliefs of the church on Elder Folkenberg’s part. No church monies were ever used or invested.

To review the actions of the president of the General Conference was the

ANALYSIS:
Caught in the Web

BY WILLIAM G. JOHNSON, editor of the Adventist Review

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Recommendation of the Special Ad Hoc Group

T he committee recognizes and affirms the visionary, energetic, and mission-focused leadership which Elder Folkenberg has given to the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church since 1990. Many and varied aspects of church life and activity have received a new sense of inspiration and purpose through initiatives he has introduced. His infectious enthusiasm and tireless travel have endeared him to church members around the world.

With deep regret the committee acknowledges that recent issues have surfaced and raise concerns in connection with Elder Folkenberg’s personal business activities and the office of the presidency. The nature and gravity of these issues and their cumulative effect is such as to erode confidence in the functions of the president and to introduce doubts about leadership integrity.

Whereas, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, from its earliest days, has been firmly committed to the highest standards of ethical conduct for its leaders and subscribes to leadership principles as set forth in Scripture, the Spirit of Prophecy, the Church Manual, the Minister’s Manual and the General Conference Working Policy, and;

Whereas, the Church is the object of God’s supreme regard and its leaders at all levels are called to serve and to protect the best interests of the church, and;

Whereas, the issues previously identified in this report seriously impact the good name of the Church and diminish members’ confidence in the credibility and integrity of the office of the president, and;

Whereas, in the view of this committee, the magnitude of these issues calls into question Elder Folkenberg’s ability to provide continued effective leadership as General Conference president, and;

Whereas, according to the General Conference Constitution and Bylaws, the General Conference Executive Committee is the only body which, between General Conference sessions, can deal with decisions affecting General Conference elected leadership, it is

Recommended to General Conference Administrative Committee: to convene the General Conference Executive Committee at the earliest opportunity to hear this matter and to express itself on a question of confidence concerning Elder Folkenberg’s continued leadership.

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and His church.

my first loyalty has to be to my Lord and not my boss; I admire and love the man. But my first loyalty has to be to my Lord and His church.

To begin to understand this matter, you need to realize that Robert Folkenberg is a leader of enormous energy and creativity. The nearly nine years of his presidency have been a whirlwind of travel, speaking appointments, and writing. Focusing on his lapses of judgment and possible errors inevitably gives a one-sided picture of his work. Further, who can claim that he or she is without fault?

The committee's work was difficult because it involved business relationships so complicated that even attorneys have a hard time figuring them out. Our assignment confined itself to ethical, not legal, considerations, but that inevitably forced us to try to determine where poor judgment crossed over the line into misuse of office.

At the center of the matter is a longstanding relationship between Robert Folkenberg and one James Moore, who is now suing Elder Folkenberg, the General Conference Corporation, and others. Folkenberg was introduced to Moore in 1976, when he was serving the church in Central America. Moore, who claimed some sort of Adventist connection, offered to help the church in the wake of the devastating earthquake in Guatemala that year. Folkenberg saw in Moore a philanthropist who might benefit the Adventist mission.

The friendship that developed from this meeting would eventually entangle the elder until he found himself caught in a web that became in his words "a nightmare," "a hell on earth."

Moore is an entrepreneur who has involved himself in land deals and other financial ventures. He has been involved with numerous corporations, many of them involving offshore headquarters, some of them nonprofit, some for profit.

Elder Folkenberg served for a time as chairman of the board of two corporations, but resigned after he was elected General Conference president in 1990. Moore joined the Roman Catholic Church in the 1980s and established at least one corporation to benefit charitable work on behalf of that church.

Moore was convicted of eight counts of fraud in 1987, and was incarcerated from 1989 to January 1, 1992. During Moore's imprisonment and subsequently Folkenberg continued to have contacts with him.

The relationship between Folkenberg and Moore that over the years had involved friendly, pastoral, and business elements turned ugly in September 1996. Moore claimed to have suffered financial loss over transactions involving a land deal and blamed Folkenberg for his financial problems. Moore further claimed that one of the corporations set up to aid Catholic charities had suffered financially.

From this time on Moore pressured Folkenberg for a financial settlement, threatening to sue Folkenberg and by extension, the General Conference (although the General Conference at no time has had any dealings with Moore). Folkenberg, caught in the web, sought to find ways to settle the matter privately. I am convinced that Folkenberg saw his endeavors as an attempt to shield the church and himself from embarrassment.

The Ad Hoc Group concluded that Folkenberg's dealings with Moore raised significant concerns about possible misuse of office, as well as the potential for such a negative impact on the world church as to warrant consideration by the church's highest body between sessions, the General Conference Executive Committee.

The Ad Hoc Group's report, concurred. It voted to call a meeting of the full committee of the General Conference—all 268 members from around the world—to consider the matter beginning on March 1, 1999.

This is the sad story of a highly respected man caught in a web. The pain it has brought to Elder Folkenberg and his family tore at the hearts of every one of us who was asked by the church to get at the facts.

One aspect especially needs to be noted. The documents relating to the matter have only come to the notice of the General Conference Officers during the past 30 days. The church has acted with commendable openness and speed to deal with it. Before any reports began to appear in the press, leaders determined that there would be no attempt at cover-up, that while Elder Folkenberg's conduct of office would be examined respectfully, fairly and compassionately, the interests of the church itself would be put first.

Thus, by March 1, only a little more than two months since Moore served notice of his lawsuit and the matter came to light, the church at its highest level will take up the ecclesiastical concerns raised by this complicated and painful matter.

Unfortunately, some people will take this occasion to cast the Adventist Church in bad light. Few, even within the ranks of the church, will find opportunity to gossip or to gloat. They would better spend their time on their knees. I urge all Adventists not to rush to judgment. Allegations by a convicted felon of themselves should not be accepted as true; every story has two sides. We should be even more cautious about rumors. Elder Folkenberg deserves to be treated fairly.

Above all, this is a time for us all to remind ourselves that the real Head of our church is no person, only the Lord Jesus Christ. The church is safe in His hands. A $H e has throughout our history, He will steer the church through these troubled waters.
The idea of Christian unity is enormously attractive to me. It was Jesus Himself who made the first call for it, in His great high-priestly prayer just before His death (John 17)—a passionate appeal that His followers to the end of time would be in unison.

And I’ve always been intrigued by the reason for unity that Jesus Himself cited: “That the world may know” (verse 23). The clause suggests at least two things to me. First, that the very fact of unity among Christians would serve as powerful testimony to Christ’s divinity and messiahship. And second, that that unity would itself constitute the mechanism for disseminating the message of His saving grace to the world.

As Jesus left the earth, the church was at one. Gathered together in an upper room in old Jerusalem, the early believers pressed their petition before the throne of God for the power and passion to confront together the strongholds of evil. Ten days later they sallied forth from the place of prayer to “turn the world upside down” (see Acts 17:6).

But in time “savage wolves” (Acts 20:29, NIV) invaded the flock of Christ, and a dark period descended upon Christendom. When it was over, three radical divisions had emerged—Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism, the last splintering even further into the more than 500 divisions we see today.

It was this scandal of disunity that representatives of 70 different denominations were seeking to correct when they convened in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1920. Twenty-eight years later these determined dreamers regrouped—this time in Amsterdam (the Netherlands)—and the World Council of Churches (WCC) was born. As in every new movement, a flood of hope swept over the delegates and wrung from their breasts the parting commitment: “We intend to stay together.”

Looking In From Outside

So why are Seventh-day Adventists not part of such a worthy vision? Though not qualified to give the church’s official answer, I would say that the issue of mission lies close to the heart of it. From our inception we’ve seen ourselves as a movement with an end-time mission to the whole world. Without passing judgment on any other religious group or entity, we see it as a fundamental part of our assignment to proclaim everywhere the summons of Revelation 14:6-12—what we label the three angels’ messages.

Those messages call, among other things, for a return to the fundamentals of the gospel and the proclamation of the hour of God’s judgment. Not only do I see no semblance of such an emphasis in the WCC, but I also believe that membership in the world body, given its forceful disapproval of what it regards as “proselytizing,” can actually imperil our commitment to the passionate fulfillment of that mission.

Yet as Adventists, we need not stand in opposition to the WCC. Nor should we attribute unwarranted motives to it. I began writing this editorial while attending the organization’s Eighth Assembly last December, in Harare.1 “Being here on the ground,” I wrote in my first draft, “gives me a chance to witness firsthand the kind of struggles through which the world body currently is passing, and the issues and challenges that confront it. For any Adventist to hint at some dark conspiracy brewing in the World Council against us as a people would be as far-fetched as I can imagine.”

In the end, Jesus’ prayer for unity should be ours as well. It’s the key to reaching earth’s teeming millions. The present world population is about 6 billion, with more than 1 billion Christians. If, in answer to Christ’s prayer, Christians would come together as one, they could, theoretically, reach the entire globe with the gospel within a single year! Talk about “finishing the work”!

Good as it sounds, however, that’s dreaming. But how I wish I weren’t dreaming when I contemplate the unity we need within the Adventist Church itself. “If Christians were to act in concert, moving forward as one . . . they would move the world.”2

1 See my report, p. 14.
2 Ellen G. White, Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 221.
I was driving through town with my 7-year-old daughter, Julie, who sat quietly in the back seat. My wife, a physician, was working night duty at a nearby clinic, and we had decided to pay her a short visit. Although traffic was not heavy on the road, we were repeatedly delayed by red traffic lights.

Suddenly Julie said very seriously, “Daddy, when I grow up, I would love to be a doctor.”

I was surprised by this statement and felt very proud. For a moment I thought that our efforts to instill Christian values into the life of our young child had been rather fruitful. I reveled in the magic moment and wanted to continue the discussion. “Why would you like to become a doctor, honey?” I asked.

“If I were a doctor,” she replied, “I could ride in an ambulance and would never have to stop at a red light.”

—Paul Retzmanik, Bad Oeynhausen, Germany

Once we visited the Voice of Prophecy headquarters in Glendale, California, and by chance met Pastor H. M. J. Richards—father of the founder of the radio-broadcast. In our conversation we talked about the Christian’s hope of heaven and the New Jerusalem. He remarked how wonderful it will be to talk with Jesus by the tree of life. “We shall ask Him our most difficult questions,” he said, “and our Saviour will quickly and easily explain them all.”

Then, with a twinkle in his eye, he remarked, “We shall say, ‘Of course—why didn’t we think of that before?’”

—Robert G. Wearner, Ooltewah, Tennessee, United States

In 1895, after meeting Adventist ministers from the mission ship Pitcairn, Norfolk Island resident Alfred Nobbs was baptized. Since then an unbroken succession of church members bearing the Nobbs name or lineage have been part of the small Norfolk Island community. Among those currently worshiping at the local Adventist church are six grandparents and their mother: front (from left): Ken, Les, Alex, Roy; back (from left): Ruby, Stephen, and mother Sylvia. Photo by B. Elliott.
From the romantic reverie of my little girl, my mind moved on to an eternal reality.

BY LESLIE KAY

Ken and Barbie have been making feverish preparations. They’ve had no time to cruise the beach in Barbie’s aqua-blue Jeep. No time for parties on the patio under the pink umbrella. No time for distractions. Because ever since Barbie got her gorgeous new bridal gown, matching veil, and dainty white pumps, one thought has reigned supreme in her otherwise air-filled blond head—the wedding.

She dreams of it day and night. She thinks of nothing else—how she’ll turn heads when she floats down the aisle like a vision of gossamer and silk. How she and her prince will trot off into the pastel sunset astride White Cloud, her flawlessly coiffed white horse. How . . .

“How Do They Fall?”

“How do people fall in love?” My 6-year-old Becky breaks from her romantic reverie and looks purposefully into my eyes.

“Well,” I venture, “they don’t really fall in love. They start out liking each other, and the better they get to know each other, the more they grow into love.” A solid answer, but sorely lacking in the stuff of legendary romance.

Becky looks unimpressed, as she does with all of my answers, and settles down to give the matter serious thought. After some deliberation, she asks, “Why do people get married?”

“First they think and pray a lot about it. Then they talk it over with their parents,” I add, studying her face to make sure this sage advice has registered in her independent little mind. “And after that, if they decide they love each other so much that they want to spend the rest of their lives together, they get married.”

Far from being the end of the matter, this explanation sparked a torrent of inquiry: “Why do they have to talk to their parents? How come they have to get married in front of everybody? Why do they want people to give them presents?”

I kept up as best I could, but wished—not for the first time—that my 6-year-old-going-on-20 could be content with childhood and its childish dreams. But Becky’s sights have always been set on the prize just beyond her reach, so I’ve never had any choice but to prepare her to take hold of it.

Aft some false, incompetent starts, her father and I have concluded that the best way to prepare our precocious daughter to take hold of this future love is to plunge her young
can instill within her the unshakable conviction that she is absolutely, unconditionally, irreversibly loved—by us and by her God. A foundation with a built-in sense of value and identity in Christ that can’t be compromised without her consent. A foundation upon which God can build the solid structure of a courageous, loving character.

And when it’s time for her to take possession of this prize for which her young heart already yearns, we’ll praise God as we present her, radiant and secure in Christ, capable of giving and receiving love, to the prince and the sunset of her choice—according to His will (and after she talks it over with us).

An Extravagant Hope

Sounds a little fatuous for our faded, sophisticated age? While it’s true that mere humanistic optimism is a futile, impotent self-indulgence, the optimism and idealism that proceed from God are a different matter; they’re made of different stuff. Our God encourages, even commands, us to hope and believe extravagantly according to His character of love.

When we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). While we were still “dead in transgressions,” God “made us alive with Christ,” “because of His great love for us” (Eph. 2:4).

This is an astonishing, unexpected love! While we were still our Father’s disobedient children, unwilling to acknowledge His divine authority, incapable of comprehending or appreciating His infinite sacrifice, He loved us—He saved us! And with our consent, this is the love He is indwelling Spirit will “shed abroad in our hearts”—the inivincible agape love that constitutes the foundation for our new birth and childhood in Christ (Rom. 5:5; KJV).

A foundation that will (and after she talks it over with us).

An Astonishing Love!

They must go deep into the solid nourishing soil of God’s agape love, a love that thankfully is not at all like the conditional self-seeking “love” with which we’re so familiar. It’s a love that never says to its beloved, “Please me, and I’ll accept you. Make it worth my while, and I’ll stick around. Disappoint or inconvenience me, and I’ll reject you.” In startling contrast to this fickle self-centered human love, “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). While we were still “dead in transgressions,” God “made us alive with Christ,” “because of His great love for us” (Eph. 2:4).

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LIFESTYLE

Single Like Me
Eight ways a church may minister

BY BEVERLY CHILSON

UNMARRIED ADVENTISTS LIKE ME make up more than one third of the adults sitting in our church pews. We include some of the most talented and creative and the most spiritual people you’ve got. So if you’ve tried to ignore us, better think again. Of course we need the church. But make no mistake, the church needs us, too.

Sadly, many singles don’t feel they are needed. In times of personal crisis some report feeling neglected by their church. Jane, for example. She came home one day to find a note from her husband of 15 years asking for a divorce. He admitted getting involved with another woman. He’d agonized over leaving her with their two young boys, but could not go on living a lie.

Suddenly Jane is very much alone. The church is the only support system she has. She needs love and support, because she may feel tainted, stigmatized, and marginalized. When her name comes up in nominating committee to fill church offices she has held before, they may look elsewhere. And this could happen just when the one thing she needs is to be involved, to keep busy.

Longtime friends keep their distance. How can she feel understood and accepted? Most likely she will quietly disappear to navigate alone through threatening seas of emotional, spiritual, and economic survival.

How long must we hover over Jane? Can a mother still be in crisis and pain 10 years after a divorce? Why doesn’t she just move on? Why are these singles so fragile? The fact is that divorce is more damaging than we think. Studies show that even after 10 years, 40 percent of women and 30 percent of men are still angry. There is so much deep heartache, so much hurt played out in damaged relationships with children and families, that the pain just stays and stays.

Not all singles are like Jane. We’re a diverse crowd. Some of our needs are not much different from those of other Adventists. We need spiritual nurturing, for example. But some of our aching needs are directly connected to our singleness, such as loneliness. Or the struggle to raise children alone. Or making ends meet in an unfamiliar workplace. Or grieving for a deceased spouse. And these hurts and personal burdens call for different sorts of help and caring.

So what can our church do for its singles? Here are some places to start:

1. Recognize that there is a need.
   Beneath the surface of the brave, defiant face singles often wear is very often a hurting heart that is desperate for friendship and acceptance and to be integrated into church life. The attitude of the local senior pastor is so important in cultivating a ministry for singles. By modeling a respect and kindly concern, and by words from the pulpit, pastors can keep their congregation aware of the needs of these individuals. Others will surely follow.

2. Develop a clear theology of divorce and remarriage.
   While there may be conflicting voices at times—some loving and accepting, and yes, some condemning—we need to minister to those attempting to survive the emotional and spiritual
The overarching goal is keeping singles growing, friendship, and service. The ance of events focusing on spiritual retreats, home potlucks for singles school class for young adults, a weekly group for single parents, a Sabbath week divorce-recovery group, a support can be the most effective method. For ing to segments of your singles group are met. In devising a program, cater- are second-class citizens, but valued members of the flock.

3. Singles need to be kept busy . . . in leadership, committees, and hands-on jobs.

As we do this, a clear message is sent to the whole congregation: singles are not second-class citizens, but valued members of the flock.

4. Support a local singles ministry.

Because singles are such a diverse group, no one program could help everyone. Each person’s needs are unique, and a successful program is one that can focus on individual pressing concerns. A common mistake is to minister so broadly that nobody’s needs are met. In devising a program, catering to segments of your singles group may be the most effective method. For example, a church might sponsor a 12-week divorce-recovery group, a support group for single parents, a Sabbath school class for young adults, a weekly Bible study, social and recreational events for singles, seminars and spiritual retreats, home potlucks for singles 60 and older, and crisis care for the bereaved. A singles ministry should be a “group of groups,” with a healthy balance of events focusing on spiritual growth, friendship, and service. The overarching goal is keeping singles happily integrated within the larger body of Christ.

5. Foster single leadership.

Whenever possible, encourage volunteersingles in leadership roles. These are often ones who have the least need themselves because they have moved on past their own crises and have been able to fill their lives with friendship, activities, and personal growth. Here’s a caution, though—the willing volunteers may not have the best leadership skills. It’s important to work doubly hard to recruit strong male leadership. I believe this is vital to a healthy singles ministry. Women can be excellent leaders, of course, but able men up front give an image of confidence and purpose, and will draw other men who may otherwise come reluctantly. If men are hard to find, a stable married couple can do the job. All leaders need leadership training that includes an assessment of their spiritual gifts and helps them fill a role for which they are equipped. The pastor’s role is to help set the vision, encourage, support, and say thanks.

6. Relationship with Christ: spiritual growth is the first priority.

A devotional singles have three main goals: relationships, involvement in a group, and spiritual nourishment. But their greatest and deepest need is spiritual. A personal intimate relationship with God will solve many problems and bring peace and serenity. Challenge them to a deeper prayer life—conversation with God throughout each day. Emphasize that God has something richer and more beautiful for them than they have ever known (Rom. 8:28; Ps. 37:3, 4) and that the path to a perfected character often leads through the reality of pain and loss and heartache ( Isa. 48:10; 1 Peter 1:6, 7). Offer a recommended reading list; I have been blessed by Larry C rabb’s Finding God and Inside Out. You can give 12 months of encouragement to a single parent with a subscription to Single-Parent Family, available from Focus on the Family (1-800-A FA M ILY). Emphasize God’s promises rather than personal feelings. Remind them that God’s tim-
What is meant by the expression “We are sinners even when we are not sinning”? If this is true, how is salvation possible? Does the Bible support this position?

These words, coined by the early churchman Augustine (A.D. 354-430), are not found, to my knowledge, in either the Bible or the writings of Ellen G. White. However, the principle that this statement encapsulates is very biblical and clearly supported in the counsel of our church prophet.

Fallen humanity—even converted fallen humanity—never loses its “fallenness”; the internal urges to sin that humanity acquired after the first transgression never leave us. We can and we do overcome them (known as the process of sanctification), but their perpetual presence produces a struggle in every life and is our basic disqualifier for heaven.

Two scriptures that speak to this issue are Romans 6:11, 12 and 7:13-23.

Notice these comments by Ellen White that illumine them: “All may now obtain holy hearts, but it is not correct to claim in this life to have holy flesh. The apostle Paul declares, ‘I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing’ (Rom. 7:18)” (Selected Messages, book 2, p. 32). “The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers as incense to the heavenly sanctuary, but passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God” (ibid., book 1, p. 344). And “From the cross to the crown there is earnest work to be done. There is wrestling with inbred sin” (Review and Herald, Nov. 29, 1887).

How then are we saved? By the unmerited gift of Christ’s righteousness; that is, the covering of His totally victorious earthly life—a life lived in our humanity but stained by neither “inbred sin” nor outward acts of transgression.

My son-in-law, a longtime leader in our local congregation, is a TV addict. He watches all kinds of programs at all hours of the day and night—sometimes all night. My daughter and I have talked with him, but he can’t or won’t stop. Fortunately his children are all grown, but he is seriously neglecting his duties as a husband as well as his work. He resents our “interfering,” and I am a widow with no other place to live. How can we help him?

Like addiction to food, sports, even work, addiction to television is sure to reduce one’s spirituality and productivity. However, this is not a breach of your son-in-law’s baptismal vows. What can be done depends upon a number of factors, including matters of temperament, personality, relationships, communication skills, his (and your) understanding of and respect for the principles of stewardship, and very important, his willingness to admit the problem.

With proper attention to variables such as these, a well-timed, noncondemnatory approach by you and/or his wife (her role under ordinary circumstances should be primary) may be helpful. A nether approach might be the concerned contact of someone else, perhaps a friend, parent, or even one of his adult children who is knowledgeable of the situation. A Christian counselor, preferably a Seventh-day Adventist, would probably be useful in thinking through the best approach.

But if none of these means is available or effective, you must prayerfully and patiently leave the matter in God’s hands, and quietly endure the consequences of his actions. This latter course will be painful, but it is preferable to adding to the tragedy of his wasted time and energies that of enduringly ruptured relationships.

Calvin B. Rock is a general vice president of the General Conference. He holds doctoral degrees in ministry and Christian ethics.
Dear Voice of Hope staff, in the name of God . . . " began a recent letter received at the Adventist Media Center and correspondence school in Cyprus. "From the time I first heard your spiritual and life-giving words, I felt a transformation taking place in my heart. For years I have searched for the one thing that is missing from my life. I finally found the love and faith that I started to feel toward Jesus Christ. I am very happy that God has shined the light of faith into my heart."

The letter continues: "The purpose for this letter is to inform you that I want to surrender my soul and my heart to Jesus Christ so that I may become one of His true followers. For this reason, I ask you to offer me your guidance. If it is no trouble, I want to discuss religious matters with a trustworthy cleric. If you know of any such person in my city, please give me his address and phone number so that I may discuss these spiritual matters with him."

"I am very thankful for all you have done."

This letter, from Reza, who lives in a Middle Eastern country, is an example of more than 3,000 letters that arrive each year at the Adventist Media Center in Cyprus. The follow-up to these letters is one of the most challenging and exciting parts of the center's work.

"When visitors come for a tour," says the center manager, "we speak with pride about the creativity of our staff and the modern facilities that have enabled us to produce nearly 2,000 Arabic and Farsi programs for broadcast on Adventist World Radio."

"But the most important place is the Health and Bible Correspondence school and the display case with all the follow-up materials. We want people to understand that without follow-up our broadcasts would not reach their full potential."

Follow-up includes letter answering, translation and publication of leaflets and booklets, and preparation of small incentive gifts. The center has also created a Web page (accessed through AWR’s website: www.awr.org/cyprus.html) and started a listeners’ club that now has 2,200 members. "We want to take care of the needs of all our listeners, both those who write from isolated places where there is no electricity or telephone service and those who excitedly send us an e-mail after seeing the Web page."

The most important follow-up is, of course, answering letters. All the staff at the center—writers, producers, and clerical staff—are involved in responding to letters. "It takes a lot of time, but it ensures that we are always in touch with the listeners’ comments about program content or format."

Listeners’ letters are often used on air, or their suggestions are turned into series of programs. "When we get letters like Reza’s," the manager says, "we take them to our morning staff worship and pray for the listener’s needs, thanking God for the opportunity we have to share Jesus’ love with so many people through the miracle of radio."

Names of persons and countries have been changed or left out. Watch future issues of the Adventist Review, World Edition AWR Page, and the AWR Letter Box in the NAD edition for more stories and letters about Adventist World Radio’s ministry in the Middle East.

Andrea Steele is director of public relations and listener services for Adventist World Radio.
DON'T LOOK NOW, DEAR, BUT THAT woman over there can’t stop staring at me.”

I was talking to my wife, Celia, as we waited at New York’s Kennedy Airport for our flight to Johannesburg, en route to Harare, Zimbabwe’s capital, site of the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC). The silver-haired woman staring at me, as I would later discover, was headed there too. She’d probably caught sight of the briefing papers I was carrying, with the WCC logo on them.

And as we neared Harare, we too would stare at others carrying their own telltale signs of the same destination—priests and bishops in flowing robes, some dark, some gaudily colorful; ministers in their clerical collars; and laypeople with WCC emblems on their carry-ons.

From every continent they came, representing 338 churches in some 100 countries around the world. At the height of the meetings their number would swell to some 4,500—delegates, guests, delegates observers, observers advisers, visitors, stewards, staff, and members of the international media, of which I was a part. For 14 days they’d be absorbed in the assembly’s theme, spelled out in briefing books, papers, and tote bags: “Turn to God—Rejoice in Hope.”

Why Africa? Why Zimbabwe?

All these people might have been assembling in Amsterdam, birthplace of the WCC back in 1948—and what better time to return there than for a fiftieth anniversary assembly? But setting aside the many invitations from the churches of the Netherlands, the WCC Central Committee opted instead for Harare. “It wanted to give a signal,” said General Secretary Konrad Raiser, of Germany, in his formal report to the assembly, “that the anniversary assembly should not be an occasion to look back . . . as [much as] an opportunity . . . to look forward into the twenty-first century.” “The future of Christianity and of the ecumenical movement,” he said, “is likely to be shaped and influenced more in regions like Africa and Latin America than in the northern regions of historic Christianity.” By the first part of the twenty-first century, he noted, “Africa promises to be the continent with the largest Christian population.”

Recalling the difficult days of Zimbabwe’s struggle for independence and the controversial financial assistance provided by the WCC at the time, Raiser gave yet another reason for returning to Africa, and to Zimbabwe in particular. “The memory of the crisis caused by the 1978 grant to the Patriotic Front of Zimbabwe/Rhodesia,” he said, “is still alive.” And the WCC’s decision to go to Harare “expressed our determination that the ecumenical fellowship of churches would not weaken in its solidarity with the African churches and people.”

Foreign news reports about Zimbabwe in the run-up to the assembly had painted a picture of a country descending into chaos, with labor unrest, demonstrations in the streets, the precipitous plunge of the Zimbabwe dollar, and (for
good measure) a strike by students of the University of Zimbabwe, site of the assembly.

Whether those reports were exaggerated or not, any nervousness I had virtually evaporated as we landed. Of course there were signs of hardship everywhere, and the country might well be sitting on a powder keg, for all I knew. But to the visitor, the capital seemed eminently peaceful.

Nevertheless, the economic state of the country and that of much of southern Africa provided the backdrop for a spirited discussion and debate on issues of public policy.

Concept of Sabbath at Center Stage

For a Seventh-day Adventist, the early debates of the WCC presented an irony both sweet and painful at the same time. Sweet because a fundamental aspect of our beliefs had quite by accident taken center stage, if only indirectly. And painful because of the reason for it.

The issue in question was that of poverty and national debt, about the human toll of globalization and the mounting debt crisis of poor nations. It was the concern of Mr. Simon Vengesayi Muzenda, Zimbabwe’s acting president, when he addressed the assembly’s opening session December 3. A nd when President Robert Mugabe showed up five days later, that was his burden as well. “The [World] Council should use its moral authority,” he said, “to appeal to the powerful nations of the West to agree to write off debts of Third World nations.”

In accepting that call, speaker after W CC speaker unashamedly reverted back to the Old Testament for the idea’s rationale. “The proclamation of the jubilee year,” said Raiser, “is part of the holiness code in the book of Leviticus [Lev. 25]. A ft er seven cycles of Sabbath years, the fiftieth year was to be observed as a jubilee year.” Raiser suggested that the W CC, drawing inspiration from its own fiftieth (jubilee) year, should call for the cancellation of debt by the year 2000. “The jubilee is meant to break the vicious cycle of domination and dependence,” he said, “by proclaiming reconciliation and liberation and by ordering a self-limitation in the exercise of power.”

I couldn’t help thinking how much stronger the appeal of the W CC might have been had its member churches not turned their backs on the weekly seventh-day Sabbath, the institution that provides the philosophical and theological rationale for the whole idea of jubilee. But Adventists do not necessarily come off clean either. For we should ask ourselves why, with the Sabbath under our belt all these years, did we not think of the idea of debt cancellation first? What we’re dealing with here is a situation in which naked greed confronts incredible poverty—
with a lot of corruption on all sides. Over the course of the session the WCC would discuss, mention, or vote on a veritable catalog of public policy issues—among them nuclear weapons in the Indian subcontinent; the British decision on former Chilean president Augusto Pinochet; the bloody 42-year-old civil war in Sudan; neocolonialism; the status of Jerusalem; weapons of mass destruction; violence against women; the environment; and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Hot-Button Issues

A briefing paper put it, WCC assemblies are “both business and celebration events.” Indeed, the celebration component begins every assembly, in the form of worship, usually under a huge tent erected for the purpose. At the Seventh Assembly in Canberra (1991), celebrants passed through Aborigines purification smoke on their way into the tent for that first worship. In Harare, the centerpiece of the first convocation consisted of a giant teak cross, the continent of Africa incorporated into it. Carved by Zimbabwean sculptor Guy Mutasa, the piece was designed to depict the sufferings, liberation, and spirituality of Africa.

In a sense, business sessions at the WCC are also times of celebration andmutual back-slapping, times when delegates compliment each other for the accomplishments of the seven years between assemblies. But they’re also times when hot-button concerns could suddenly boil to the surface. I will mention just three such issues, each with implications, I think, for Seventh-day Adventists.

1. The Issue of Representation.

Youth also came in for mention in the moderator’s report. They must be integrated, he said, into the life and work of the council.

Then, during a brief business plenary just before President Mugabe arrived December 8, the nominating committee presented its first (interim) report on the slate of members for the WCC Central Committee. And all hell broke loose. Youth delegates took to the floor, clamoring for greater representation. And indigenous peoples. And underrepresented geographical regions. And women.

The icy comment by Dr. Marion Best of the United Church of Canada, a retiring member of the Central Committee, said it all: “I feel a very deep disappointment, fast rising to a high level of anger.” “When the Ecumenical Decade in Solidarity With Women was launched,” she said, “I tried to support it . . . and now the percentage of women on the [Central] Committee is less than it was at Canberra. I don’t know if I want to continue in [this body] if it doesn’t change.” It was arguably one of the bit-terest moments of the assembly. For a few seconds afterward, you could hear a pin drop.

2. Orthodox Discontent.

When the WCC formed in 1948, a prominent figure at the meeting was the patriarch of Constantinople. And the Orthodox have been associated with the WCC ever since. These days, however, the group is giving the WCC ulcers. The basic issue is one of representation. Since 1948 the membership of the WCC has increased by 229.9 percent—from 147 member churches to 338 today. During that same time Orthodox membership reached its max: 15 member churches—with virtually no possibility of rising higher, given the fixedness of the church’s organization and regional setup. That level of representation, as the Orthodox see it, translates into an inability to influence WCC decisions; and that, it seems to me, is the crux of the Orthodox dilemma. They feel a sense of powerlessness in an organization.

AT THE CENTER: Spreading its arm over WCC moderator Aram I, a giant 4.5-meter wooden cross, the continent of Africa incorporated in it, took center stage at the first worship celebration, December 3.
they helped to form. Moreover, the large influx of Protestant churches makes them feel that the WCC has essentially become a Western, Protestant, liberal organization.

It was this perception that, among other things, led to the decision by the Georgian and Bulgarian Orthodox churches to announce during an inter-Orthodox meeting at Thessaloníki, Greece, last May that they were suspending membership in the WCC.

Debate over these and related issues was intense and, at times, testy. Said one Orthodox speaker, "We feel less and less at home here." And unless the structure of the WCC undergoes radical change soon, he said, more Orthodox churches will follow the example of the two at Thessaloníki and leave the WCC.

The strongest exchange resulted from a statement by the Rev. Dr. Hilarion Alfeyev, of the Russian Orthodox Church, who claimed to be representing the largest church in the WCC. His complaint was that the WCC, while reluctant to discuss hot-button issues such as the veneration of Mary or icons, was all too eager to bring forward subjects such as inclusive language and the ordination of women. "Are these not also divisive?" he asked.

This, coming after another Russian Orthodox speaker (Fr. Vseolod Chaplin) had characterized the ordination of women as "blasphemous," was too much for Rev. Rose Hudson-Wilkin of the Church of England. "What is the problem?" she asked with fire in her voice. "Some say they're bigger; others say they're richer; still others complain about not being taken seriously." "Brothers and sisters," she cried, "this is about power. Let's not confuse the issue by wrapping it up in theological and ecclesiastical jargon."

While the assembly was recovering from the thunderous applause that followed Hudson-Wilkin's remarks, yet another Orthodox speaker was preparing to deliver what would be the most conciliatory remarks of the whole debate. The Orthodox Church of Georgia had sent an adviser to the present assembly, he said. "By doing that," he said, "they want to show that the Orthodox are not fanatics or unfriendly." Because of certain fundamentalists and extremists, he went on to explain, the patriarch of the Georgian Church had been forced to suspend membership in the council in order to avoid an internal split. "But the sympathies of the Georgian Church are with the WCC," he said, "and they hope soon to return." It was an extraordinary statement, and it brought the house down.

But the reality remains. And in the coming months, as the dust settles, the WCC will have to struggle with the question of drastic institutional changes in order to stave off an Orthodox exodus. But whether even that will solve the problem is anyone's guess. Said A rchbishop A nastasios of Tirana and A ll A lbania during the same debate, "The problem is not one of representation, and everyone knows that. The great question is: Shall we stay or shall we go out?"

3. The C U V Document. In September 1997 the WCC's C entral C ommittee adopted a statement that was to generate considerable debate at the Harare session. The statement, "Towards a C ommon U nderstanding and Vision of the W C C " (CUV for short), attempts to articulate a new perception of the nature and purpose of the ecumenical movement, and the
relationship of the WCC to it. World Council leaders saw it as “a significant milestone in an ongoing journey of self-reflection.”

But as the document reached the floor, it ran into a wall of opposition. As I was to discover, the most controversial element was not at all spelled out in it, but rather implied. And it had to do with the idea of ecumenical dialogue with those Christian churches and ecumenical organizations not currently part of the WCC. The term forum, designed, as the general secretary put it, to “foster wider relationships beyond membership,” bringing together Christian churches and ecumenical organizations not currently part of the WCC. The term forum will present the most tricky ecumenical situa-

tion yet for Seventh-day Adventists. As Raiser put it, there’d be nothing to subscribe to, nothing to sign. It will, he said, “provide room both for wide variety of forms, and for differences and even conflicts,” leaving “ample space for diversity and for open mutual confrontation of differing interests and convictions.”

With such broad parameters, Adventists would come under increasing pressure to participate. And we will need to come up with new answers that are clear, logical, and convincing—not only to inquirers from outside, but also to Adventists themselves.

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**World Council 101**

**BY ROY ADAMS**

*(Gleaned in large part from “Some Common Questions Asked About the WCC” [a document put out by the World Council Office of Communication, Sept. 1998], from other WCC documents, and from my own observations).*

The World Council of Churches (WCC) formally came into being August 23, 1948, at its first assembly in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, with an initial membership of 147 (mostly Protestant) churches. It describes itself as “a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.” Its aim is to pursue the goal of the visible unity of the church.

The word “churches” used to describe membership does not refer to individual, local churches, but rather to whole denominations in a particular geographical region—the Anglican Church of Kenya, for example, would include all the Anglican churches in Kenya. My calculation puts the current number of churches in the WCC at 338, with a membership of more than 100 countries. The WCC is quick to point out that it does not “represent” that many Christians (in the sense of being able to speak or act for them), nor does it have any constitutional “authority” over them.

When the organization started in 1948, the majority of its member churches came from the Northern Hemisphere; today the majority come from the Southern Hemisphere; today the majority come from the Southern Hemisphere.

The Roman Catholic Church is not a member of the WCC. Also not members are a large group of Evangelical churches, Pentecostal churches, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

To become a member, a church must subscribe to the basic confession of the WCC (as described above) and have a membership of 25,000 or more. Churches with smaller memberships (though not lower than 10,000) are accepted as associate members. There is no constitutional provision at the moment for any church to be expelled or suspended from membership.

The WCC operates on a budget of CHF 74.1 million (about US$53.3 million). Just under 40 percent comes from Germany, with Sweden, the Netherlands, and the United States the next biggest contributors. There is no annual fee as such, though all churches are expected to make a minimum contribution of CHF 1,000 (about US$720).

As of January 1, 1998, there were 217 full-time-equivalent posts at the WCC, occupied by 242 persons. That number was expected to be down to 195 by January 1999. Most of the employees work at the WCC administrative center in Geneva, or in New York.

The WCC’s highest decision-making body is the assembly, which meets approximately every seven years. The governing body between sessions is the Central Committee, elected by the assembly. The highest officials are the moderator and the general secretary, both elected by the Central Committee. The assembly also elects eight (largely ceremonial) presidents to serve seven-year terms between sessions.
The Diversity Breakdown

BY ROY ADAMS

The third report of the Eighth Assembly nominating committee, like the preceding two, generated hot debate. But it passed. I thought it might be interesting for us as Adventists, though we have a completely different system, to take a look at how diversity representation shakes down.

The composition of the newly elected Central Committee is as follows:

- 39.4 percent women
- 14.7 percent young people (35 or younger)
- 24.6 percent representatives of the two Orthodox "families"
- 43.3 percent laypersons

also to those from within.

The Future of the WCC

These days one can go to the Internet and find all the information one needs about the WCC. But being on the ground in Harare gave me the opportunity to look into the eyes of delegates, to hear the tone of their voices as they delivered speeches on the floor, to read their body language, to overhear candid conversations on the grounds and in the vans between hotel and meeting place. Most important, it allowed me to see these people as fellow human beings and Christians.

And my impression from it all is that in the WCC we’re looking at an organization struggling for survival in the modern world.

Space will not permit a discussion of the almost intractable theological and ecclesiological obstacles standing in the way of complete organic unity of the churches. But there is one mundane problem that, having already shown signs of threatening the functioning of the WCC, deserves mentioning. It has to do with money.

As the financial report came to the floor, delegates heard details about what the moderator earlier had referred to as “serious financial upheavals” in the WCC during the past seven years. They heard about radical restructurings and cutbacks (see first sidebar); about the fact that the financial support of the WCC depended almost completely on just 10 (of the 338) member churches; and that 48 percent of current member churches made absolutely no financial contribution to the organization. The breakdown of the total support for 1997 painted a disturbing picture: Western Europe—81.76 percent; United States and Canada—15.83 percent; the rest of the world—2.41 percent.

Finance committee chair Bishop Wolfgang Huber, of the Evangelical Church of Germany, made the appropriate assessment: “When 48 percent of churches do not make a contribution,” he said, “it must be a real alarm to us.”

The present financial crunch within the WCC, if it continues, can combine with a growing malaise over a variety of difficult issues and questions to destabilize the organization. And I would speculate that this can present an opportunity for the Catholic Church to step in.

I’ve always been intrigued that the Catholic Church, notwithstanding all its expressions of goodwill and support over the years, and in spite of every kind of wooing on the part of the WCC, still remains organizationally aloof. Why?

We’re talking here about an entity with centuries of experience in negotiation, diplomacy, and cunning. And I have a hunch that it knows exactly what it wants out of the WCC. I do not think it intends to join that organization and take its place as one member among equals. But at a time that’s right for it, it will “join”—on its own terms, or on terms tailor-made for it. My sense is that the future of the WCC lies with the Catholic Church.

What I Took Away

The thing that kept coming back to me as I left Harare was the social conscience of the WCC. And although my personal convictions differ at key points with theirs, I nevertheless found myself profoundly impressed by their courage, candor, and decency on matters of public policy. Especially was I impressed by the call for the cancellation of debt, an idea I considered off-the-wall as late as a year ago. On this issue my current impression is that they are more in line with the ancient Hebrew prophets than we are.

But will the WCC’s appeal succeed? Will Western governments listen? Will the International Monetary Fund respond? Will the multinationals give a hoot? I don’t know. But the Lord has not called us to be successful—only to be faithful, to bear an honest witness. “Each time a . . . [person] stands up for an idea,” said Robert Kennedy, “or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, . . . [they] send out a tiny ripple of hope. Then crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that will sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.”

We may never live to see it all happen. We may never be able to gauge the measure of success. But we will not be excused if we do not try. “Occupy till I come,” Jesus said. And I get the impression that the WCC, perhaps inadvertently, is in a sense doing just that.

1 WCC document PL4.1, p. 3.
2 Ibid.
3 The term refers to the present world economy, greedily (and sometimes artificially) manipulated by huge multinational business conglomerates.
4 WCC document PL4.1, p. 4.
5 WCC document PL3.1, p. 7.
6 Dr. Best, incidentally, was returned to the Central Committee as vice moderator.
7 To many observers, however, the Orthodox virtually have veto powers at the council.
8 WCC document PL4.1, pp. 11, 12.
9 Ibid., p. 12.
10 Ibid., p. 8.

Roy Adams is an associate editor for the Adventist Review.
Adventists Attacked in Wave of Violence Against Christians in India

Seventh-day Adventists were among other Christians attacked in a wave of violence that spread through Gujarat state, India, after anti-Christian speeches during a Hindu group rally.

The Adventist church in Limbayat, Surat City, was attacked, and church members locked themselves inside during worship services on December 25. The attackers destroyed vehicles and other property on church grounds.

M. S. Jeremiah, president of Surat Adventist Management College, said one church member suffered injuries when an attacker swung a cricket bat at him.

In Ahwa, where most of the violence occurred, the violence focused on Catholic churches and members. Adventists have also experienced violence, although no details are yet available, as indicated by G. E. Sharon, president of the Gujarat Conference.

"Many of our church members were being called to the police stations to give evidence against attackers, and were subjected to rough treatment," says Jeremiah. "The commissioner of police has advised that none of our members should respond to police demands. The situation is now more or less under control, largely because of the nationwide outcry against the violence."

Adventist leaders in India have assigned Justus Devadas to visit the affected areas. He was unable to visit Dangs district as a result of restrictions imposed by the authorities. Despite claims by the Gujarat government that militant Hindu groups are not connected to the incidents, many leaders of these groups have been arrested.

South Africa asks Radio Good News to Return to Air

The Independent Broadcast Authority of South Africa recently urged Radio Good News, a Seventh-day Adventist station in Johannesburg, to return to the air.

The station's board had decided to temporarily cease operations on November 30, 1998, in the belief that they might have to yield to pressures to broadcast programs inconsistent with their philosophy.

"We may see some people do some strange things in 1999," says Paige Patterson, president of the 15-million-member Southern Baptist Convention. "Paranoia is building . . . and that is unfortunate."

Will Adventists, in our zealousness to "get in first" and proclaim the Second Coming, overreact to the coming of the new millennium? We might be embarrassed if we do.

A survey of 1,027 adult Americans, conducted recently by Scripps Howard and Ohio University, shows that 72 percent believe the world will come to a sudden and apocalyptic end. But despite the predictions of doomsday cults and God-spoke-to-me-and-told-me-to-tell-you religious leaders, two thirds believe looming global demise is "very unlikely."

Good for them. After all, while we believe that Jesus could return this millennium, we do well to remind ourselves that January 1, 2000, in itself has no more significance than January 1, 1000.
Test Your Global Mission IQ

1. While preaching in an African village, Global Mission pioneer S. L. Chaunga stated that the Bible is the only true revelation of salvation. A 4-year-old girl walked forward crying. The next day her father brought Sara back to get the “book” that she wanted. She selected the Bible. As a result of this unusual behavior, her whole family joined the Adventist Church. Sara’s village of Chiponda lies across Lake Nyasa from Mozambique. What is her home country?
   A. Zambia  
   B. Malawi  
   C. Namibia  
   D. Zimbabwe

2. In northern Antioquia, 100 miles from the Caribbean, a woman has preached for several years. The people she won to Christ in the city of Caucasia met in a home. A church in Medellin and the Hands Across the World offerings helped build a church. Where in the Inter-American Division is this building being erected?
   A. Panama  
   B. Venezuela  
   C. Ecuador  
   D. Colombia

3. On the island of Malaita a Global Mission pioneer started a school. A devil priest had 37 children and enrolled them. The influence of Christian songs by his children led him to ask for studies. At his baptism he walked to the river in his costume, complete with a pig’s-teeth necklace and shell-money armbands. After the baptism he took off and put on a clean white shirt and pants to symbolize the robe of Christ’s righteousness. Malaita is near Guadalcanal in the South Pacific’s Melanesian group and is part of what island nation?
   A. Cook Islands  
   B. New Caledonia  
   C. Solomon Islands  
   D. Northern Marianas

Answers:
   1. B. Malawi, population 10 million, is largely Christian, yet unentered areas and unreached peoples exist.
   2. D. Colombia. The West Central Colombian Mission church membership of 22,000 serves a population of 5.6 million. Caucasia lies at the northern edge.
   3. C. Solomon Islands. There are many Adventists; several hold important government positions.

— compiled by Don Yost of the General Conference Global Mission Office

Korean University Choir Receives Award

The Korean Sahmyook University choir joined with the Ministry of Education of Korea in presenting the government’s 1999 New Year’s music concert in Seoul on January 18. More than 600 government workers and community members attended the event, sponsored by the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs.

“Although Korea is still struggling with financial difficulties, these students raised their voices with happiness and joy, with great expectations for the new year,” said Tadaomi Shinmyo, communication director for the Adventist Church in Korea.

The choir was asked to present the program after receiving the first-place award during the National University Music Contest, held on November 12, 1998. It is the second consecutive year that the choir has received this award. The university has approximately 2,800 students.

Adventist Youth March for a Drug-free Lifestyle

More than 2,000 young Pathfinders in Sydney, Australia, marched across the Sydney Harbour Bridge in a demonstration to promote a drug-free lifestyle.

The Drug-free Walk was organized by the Greater Sydney Conference Youth Department and included Christian youth from other denominations, reports Larry Laredo, conference communication director.

Australian prime minister John Howard sent a personal representative to launch the walk, which started at the Sydney Opera House. In a written message, Howard commended the church for organizing the walk in an effort to educate the community about the enormous benefits of a drug-free lifestyle.

What’s Upcoming

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<tr>
<td>Feb. 13-20</td>
<td>Christian Home and Marriage Week</td>
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<td>Youth Temperance Day</td>
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<td>Feb. 20</td>
<td>Health and Temperance Magazine promotion</td>
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Our Guiding Star

Faith in Jesus, the incarnate God, is the path of salvation.

EARLY 2,000 YEARS AGO THE STILLNESS of a Judean night was shattered by a baby’s cry. Born in poverty, raised in obscurity, the Child of Mary would become the most controversial Person in history. Although He was called Prince of peace, wars would be fought in His name. Although He poured out His life to bring healing of body and mind to all around Him, families would be divided—children against parents and parents against children—because of Him.

Who was He? The question troubled those who heard Him and saw Him. It has troubled every generation since. It troubles us, too; since the birth of that Babe in Bethlehem, Jesus of Nazareth has been a nagging question on the conscience of humanity, refusing to let it rest.

He Himself challenged His generation—and every subsequent one—with the question. “Who do you say I am?” He asked His disciples. And when Peter replied spontaneously “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God,” Jesus acknowledged the answer with “Simon son of Jonah, you are favoured indeed! You did not learn that from mortal man; it was revealed to you by my heavenly Father” (Matt. 16:15-17, NEB).

Seventh-day Adventists have faced the issue of the ages—Who was Jesus?—and have given Peter’s answer. They believe that Jesus of Nazareth was no mere man—although He was fully human. They believe that He was Immanuel, God with us; that the eternal God had condescended to be incarnated among humanity in Him. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father” (John 1:1, 14, RSV).

How God could become man is a mystery. Human experience offers no analogy that remotely unlocks the wonder of it all. “Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16).

Seventh-day Adventists do not attempt to unlock the mystery of the Incarnation. We accept the testimony of Scripture, rejoicing in the good news that God has not left us alone, that He gave His Son, eternally preexistent, to us in the miracle of Bethlehem. And we accept Him as God in the flesh because of what we have experienced and still experience: in His name we find forgiveness of sins, freedom from guilt, and joyous fellowship for a new way of life.

Jesus said: “If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36, RSV). Seventh-day Adventists have found the freedom Jesus promised—He keeps His word! He said further: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28, RSV). We have come, weary and burdened, and have found the peace He promised.

That is why we’re a people who love and follow Jesus. He is the center of our faith. More than any doctrine, more than any practice, more than any facet of organization, more than any goal or purpose—our movement focuses on Him. Without Him everything else we believe in and preach; all our hospitals, schools, and universities; all our evangelical crusades and social uplift programs—everything would be worthless. He is the “bottom line” of Adventism.

Christianity, as we understand it, is essentially a relationship.
It is a day-by-day experience of knowing Jesus, the risen Lord, of sensing His guiding hand and powerful presence. It is like a marriage: we have fallen in love with Him, and each day we seek to love Him more and know Him better.

This kind of life is a life of faith, of course. Once Jesus walked and talked among people; they could look into His eyes, hear His words, take hold of His strong hands. Today we do not see Him. In our hurt and perplexity we grope for His guiding hand, we strain to catch the whisper of His voice. And He is there. “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,” He promised (Matt. 28:20). The experience of the early Christians still holds true: “Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy” (1 Peter 1:8, RSV).

Faith is not a feeling. It is trust—trust that takes God at His word. At times, in fact, feelings run counter to faith: we feel discouraged, dismayed, at our wits’ end. But faith keeps holding on, keeps hoping, keeps praying, keeps believing. And faith reminds itself of the Rock on which it is built.

The human experiences of Jesus are precious to us. When we feel weary, we remember that He also became weary. When we feel the heat of the test—when life crashes in upon us and we reach the point of human extremity—we remember that He too endured the tests and trials of life. He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Since He Himself passed through the test of suffering, He is able to help those who are meeting their test now (Heb. 2:18).

Jesus—Our Favorite Subject

The life and teachings of Jesus—it is our favorite subject for reflection. Probably the most popular spiritual book outside the Bible that Adventists study is The Desire of Ages, by Ellen G. White. A massive devotional study of Jesus, it urges us to spend time every day in contemplation of the miracle of the Incarnation. “It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon Him great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.”

Especially the closing scenes! Great as was the life of Jesus—His teachings, His miracles, His sinless accomplish-
ment of the Father’s mission—its high point came at the end. Unlike any other person, this Man was born to die. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”

“Christ died for our sins” (John 3:16; 12:24, RSV; 1 Cor. 15:3).

Jesus Died for the Sins of the World
We’re people who believe what the Bible teaches about the cross—that Jesus died for the sins of the world. We believe that “he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (Isa. 53:5; 2 Cor. 5:19).

Jesus lived a perfect life as a man. But without the cross we are lost—His perfect example only condemns us, showing us what we might be and should be. The guilt of our failures lies heavy on us; we have nothing to boast of before God, nothing to give us hope.

But His cross gives us hope. “A sower sowed up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life” (John 3:14, 15, RSV). We believe. We accept that in Jesus God has done for us what we could never do for ourselves, that He has taken our place, borne our penalty, and given us life.

So nothing can take away the centrality of Calvary for us. We understand from Scripture that Jesus is now our heavenly high priest, that He is judge. But these beliefs do not add to the value of the sacrifice He made for us on the cross; rather they flow from it. The cross is the turning point of history.

The devotional study of the life of Jesus, The Desire of Ages, beautifully expresses our understanding of the significance of Calvary. “Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was con-

demned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. ‘With his stripes we are healed.’ “God loving us so much that He becomes one with us, sharing our lot and bearing our burdens; God taking our place to set us free from the guilt and power of evil—how can we help but love Him! We have sensed His forgiving love, and we want to love Him. We are amazed at the story of Jesus, and we want to follow His life.

Two-Part Name Has Meaning
The two parts of our name, “seventh day” and “Adventist,” express how we love and try to follow Jesus. “Seventh day” lets people know that we observe the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week—Saturday—as a day of worship. The Sabbath was the day Jesus observed, and therefore we too observe it. Although Jesus came into conflict with the religious leaders of His day over the manner of Sabbath keeping, He never suggested that the day itself should be changed. We try to keep the Sabbath as Jesus taught us to keep it. It is a beautiful day, a time of relaxation, fellowship, worship, and helping others. To us it symbolizes our rest and freedom in Him—the One who has given us rest from sin and made us free for Himself.

Certainly, at times the Sabbath is inconvenient. Sometimes people who come to understand the Bible’s teaching about the Sabbath have to make a choice between their job or the Sabbath. Seventh-day Adventists have made such choices and still make them. We don’t thereby feel better than other Christians or as though we are earning favor with God. We keep the Sabbath because we love Him and want to follow Him, no matter what it costs us. We keep it because we are Christians.

The Sabbath, of course, is but one of the Ten Commandments. The Scriptures take this law seriously, and so do we. By God’s grace we try to live according to its ideals, especially as Jesus expounded them in the Sermon on the Mount and by His own example. Now, we don’t do so in order to win God’s love or to be saved. Instead, because He loves us and has forgiven us by Jesus’ death for us, we want to show our love by a life that is like His. We are His sons and daughters, and we want to honor Him by living worthy of His name. He said: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15, RSV).

“Adventist” expresses our belief that the Jesus whom we love is coming again. “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again,” He promised (verses 2, 3). “This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven,” the angels assured at His ascension (Acts 1:11, RSV).

We rejoice at that prospect. We know it is sure—His first coming guarantees it; Calvary has made absolutely certain His eternal reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.

From our understanding of the Bible, we believe He is return is near. So we proclaim it around the world by voice and pen, by radio and television, from pulpits and in homes. We want people to know about it, to be ready for it, to rejoice with us in it.

In this world men and women are driven by various motivations. Some people live for pleasure, some for power, and some for possessions. And many in our times are adrift, with no guiding star.

Jesus is the guiding star for Seventh-day Adventists. In Him we find pleasures evermore; in Him we have peace, joy, and strength for each day; in Him we have hope for a glorious tomorrow.

That’s why we’re people who love and follow Jesus.

1 The Desire of Ages, p. 83.
2 Ibid., p. 25.

William G. Johnsson is editor of the Adventist Review.
As this ever happened to you? You are reading a really good book, and it's such a good story that you can't wait to see what happens next. Then you hear this buzzing noise that you sort of notice, but you mostly ignore. And then you realize with a start that the buzzing noise is your mother and she is standing there looking stern and saying something like “Why didn’t you answer me?”

Or how about this? Your dad is sitting in front of the computer and you ask him something, and you know he isn’t paying attention, because he answers “Mmmm,” and that’s not even close to the right answer.

And have you ever tried to talk to a friend when he’s playing a video game? Good luck.

Sometimes when people are reading or playing a game or watching TV, they almost seem to disappear into what they are doing. They don’t notice what is going on around them in the real world. They escape from reality.

This kind of escape can cause problems, as you’ve no doubt discovered. Other people don’t appreciate being ignored while you’re off in storybook land. And sometimes people choose to escape into the TV set or computer instead of doing their homework or chores. They try to escape responsibility—or at least avoid it for a while.

However, escape is not always a bad thing. Sometimes escape is very good indeed, such as when a slave escapes to freedom. You may have read some exciting stories about great escapes—a narrow escape from a shark attack or a desperate escape from a prisoner-of-war camp or a successful escape on the Underground Railroad.

Jesus talks about the very best kind of escape: “If you continue to obey my teaching, you are truly my followers. Then you will know the truth. And the truth will make you free” (John 8:31, 32, ICB).

Free from what? Free from sin. We are slaves to sin (verse 34). Jesus can help us escape the slavery of sin. When we obey Jesus, He helps us escape from selfishness and lies and anger.

This kind of escape is not an escape from reality. It is an escape into reality. You will know the truth.

You will find freedom from responsibility. You find the freedom to be responsible. The truth will make you free.
Life-and-death Matters

There’s a world beyond stained glass and church pews where the most important thing is helping people get connected with God.

There are many pictures and paintings of people praying in cathedrals. But we never see pictures and paintings of people praying in their lavatories.

That’s probably because cathedrals are uplifting places:
clean, quiet, peaceful, and protective. Lavatories are sometimes messy, smelly, soiled—and real. The word itself doesn’t seem to fit well on the glossy pages of the Adventist Review.

People never pray in lavatories.

Well, I confess, I do.
In the Middle of It

It was a usual morning of pastoral care in the hospital where I worked as a chaplain. I asked the nurse at the nursing station if there were any patients on the unit who needed a pastoral-care visit. The nurse paused, then with compassion in her eyes she said, “There’s a 41-year-old gentleman in room 642.” He needs to talk with you. He came in a few days ago with a bowel obstruction. Surgery left him with an ileostomy. He’s a very sick man, and I don’t think he knows how serious it is. He’s not doing well; perhaps you could help him.”

When I entered the room, it smelled like a bedpan. The patient was lying naked on the bed. Two large clumps of gauze soaked in greenish body waste were lying on his abdomen. He was trying to wipe the oozing mess at his side, smearing it up to his elbows. It was on the bed, on the sheets, everywhere. Pain and despair were broadcast from the man’s face.

Holding my breath and trying to mask my anxiety, I struggled to find my role as a chaplain in the crucible of real life, in a world of suffering. My prayer ascended: “God, help me to know how to minister to this distressed man.”

Talking the Talk

Possibly this description troubles you. It would surely be more comfortable if we were talking cathedral talk. How good to be in a cathedral! Yet there are times when the issues of life call us to be in the midst of excrement, because that’s where humanity all too frequently finds itself. Are you willing to be there? Possibly to pray?

I’ve been a Seventh-day Adventist all of my life. Many of those years were spent directly in the work of the church. Having decided early in life to serve God as a minister, I learned well what church talk is, and I used it liberally. Ecclesiology, gospel order, governance, outreach—I preached it; I defended it.

Religious rectitude had been a lifelong goal for me. Family, friends, and fellow church members affirmed it. But somehow I knew I was out of touch with the real world. Hence, a journey for me into health-care ministry.

Church talk doesn’t work in the hospital. You see, the patient in room 642 needed a little spiritual help, and it had to be real talk.

God’s Gift to the Church

God gave the Adventist Church an incredible gift. The record of our Lord’s life is replete with prophetic promises that His church would be called to exercise that same gift. In Bible times it was called the “gift of healing.” In modern times it’s called “health care.” And Jesus Christ is still within the walls of health-care institutions today, ministering His love and grace to suffering humanity. The Bible says, “Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity” (Matt. 9:35, RSV). Jesus is still there, and healing the sick in our times largely happens in hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes.

Yet there are those who think the church could do the ministry of Christ without health care. Some of us stay in our “cathedrals,” where it’s comfortable. And when we don’t look beyond the stained-glass windows we don’t see what it’s like out there in places of health ministry.

The place smelled of cancer, but it was, in fact, a “cathedral.”

Unutterable Groanings

A mother was just admitted to the emergency room. It was Friday evening, a few minutes after sunset. The medical staff called the chaplain. This mother, with her husband and younger children, had come to the city to celebrate the high school graduation of her 19-year-old son. At the hotel where they were staying their 9-year-old daughter had fallen into the swimming pool. At the time the mother was recuperating from heart surgery that had occurred just two weeks earlier. However, she was the one who made the horrifying discovery at the pool and overexerted herself in dragging her child from the water, unconscious but still alive.

The ambulance had rushed both mother and child to the hospital. The mother was taken to one room, and her darling child was taken to another.

Enter the chaplain.

In a third room the father and the 19-year-old graduating son have just learned that the medical staff was not able to save the life of the little sister. The mother didn’t yet know her baby was dead. The big brother wailed uncontrollably in abject grief and self-blame. Had he not urged the family to come to his graduation, this would not have happened. His grief was beyond words.

The father, with pleading eyes and rolling tears, cried out for God to help. He knew this news would rip his wife’s soul apart. We prayed together. The peace of Jesus brought a measure of composure.

Finally the moment arrived, and the anxious mother was told that her sweet and precious child had died. Instantly the emergency department echoed with screams of measureless agony—“I want my baby! I want my baby! I want my baby!”

The spiritual ministry required in those moments of despair is far greater in kind and purpose than that which the finest seminaries could provide.
Only Jesus’ presence can make a difference—and He did.

Hours later that Sabbath eve I went away, thanking God that the hospital, with its medical and support staff, is a place for Jesus to heal the brokenness of suffering humanity.

Rejoicing With Great Joy

The telephone rang, and a nurse said, “Chaplain, there’s a patient here who is requesting someone to come and pray with him.”

As I entered the room, the patient, a 57-year-old man, greeted me warmly and introduced me to several family members seated at his bedside. He told me about the cancer he had; that he was preparing for a surgery the next day. However, the fact was that his condition was terminal and the surgical procedure was intended merely to relieve the pain in his spinal column.

I asked him about his relationship with God. “Well,” he began, “this is why I called for you. In my earlier years I was a Christian, but as time went on, I didn’t live up to the values I had known. I married and raised a wonderful family. My wife at one time was an Adventist, but we failed to teach our children the things we should have taught them. I can’t do anything about that now, but I wanted you to come and pray with me, because I do believe in Jesus Christ. I wanted all of my family to be here with us, because I am going to take my stand for Jesus.”

No sweeter words can be spoken from one child of God to another—whether in a cathedral or in a hospital.

I talked a little more with the patient about his experience with God. “Well,” he began, “this is why I called for you. In my earlier years I was a Christian, but as time went on, I didn’t live up to the values I had known. I married and raised a wonderful family. My wife at one time was an Adventist, but we failed to teach our children the things we should have taught them. I can’t do anything about that now, but I wanted you to come and pray with me, because I do believe in Jesus Christ. I wanted all of my family to be here with us, because I am going to take my stand for Jesus.”

No sweeter words can be spoken from one child of God to another—whether in a cathedral or in a hospital.

I shared with him the assurances of God’s “lavish” grace (see Eph. 1:7, 8). I reviewed with him the story of the prodigal son. He listened carefully and with obvious enjoyment to the meaning of Scripture in his hour of need.

Surrounding his bed now, the whole family joined hands together with me. I spoke briefly, sharing with the family the wonderful thing their husband/father was doing in securing his salvation in Jesus. As if to underscore the appeal to his wife and children, he said, “I want to give all of my soul to God.”

The next few minutes were made holy by Jesus’ presence. This precious man and his family presented before God their need of His mercy and grace. What an honor it was for me to be a disciple of Jesus, chosen by Him to help this man into his eternity. We prayed in positive assurance that whoever believes in Jesus has eternal life. I asked God, on his behalf, for the forgiveness of his sins and for pardon for having neglected to live according to the way he had known to be right. I committed this man, his wife, and his children into God’s wonderful care.

When the amens were said, smiles shone on every face. God’s peace was in that place. It smelled of cancer, but it was, in fact, a “cathedral.”

I will ever remember the words this man excitedly said as we bade farewell. He said, “I feel better now; in fact, I feel very much better now.” Once again one of God’s children experienced spiritual healing. Life on earth ended for my patient-brother, but I do believe he will be in the kingdom of heaven. And it happened in the context of Adventist health care, in the real world where life matters, both in the here and now and in the reality yet to be.

This is only part of the story. The ministry of reaching people where they live is accomplished in Adventist homes, schools, churches, offices, shops, wherever believers are sensitive to the leading of the Spirit.

And based on my brief experience with it, Adventist health care is much the same as it was when the apostle John wrote concerning Jesus’ ministry: “There are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (John 21:25, RSV).

* Fictitious room number. The patient in this story has authorized the writer to share his personal experience anonymously.

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Romans 5:12 seems to say that we die because of Adam’s sin and also because of our individual sinning. Is that what the passage is saying?

Romans 5:12-21 contains one of the most important discussions on the significance of Christ’s death. Paul describes the results of Adam’s sin and contrasts it with what God accomplished through Christ to demonstrate God’s abounding grace. In order to understand verse 12 properly it is necessary to analyze the whole section and what Paul teaches elsewhere on those subjects. However, the analysis must start with the verse itself.

1. Sin is personified. Sin is foreign to God’s creation; it came from the outside. Nothing is stated about its origin. It is described as a person waiting at the door of the world for someone to give “him” access to it. This personification will be developed in Romans 6 and 7, where sin is described as a powerful and enslaving king.

2. Adam’s sin is unique. The consequences of Adam’s trespass set it apart from any other committed by any of his descendants. His trespass had universal impact in that he opened the door for sin to take control over the world. A dam mediated (“Through one man . . .”) this evil phenomenon that came accompanied by its inseparable consort, death: both physical and spiritual death.

3. Universality of sin and death. These two powers took over the “world.” The main emphasis is the world of human beings, but one cannot rule out the rest of creation. Creation itself was enslaved by the power of sin and awaits its liberation (Rom. 8:20-22). There is a solidarity between Adam, humans, and the rest of the world, but it is a solidarity as the result of Adam’s action. This is suggested by the phrase “in this way,” which can be rendered “consequently” or “therefore.” Death is universal because it “went through/arrived at all men.” Death became the inescapable destination of every human being.

4. A dam’s sin and individual sinning. Sin is also universal—all die, because all sinned (Rom. 5:12). There was a time when instead of using the word “because,” some translated the original “in whom” (in A dam) all sinned, to support the idea of original sin; but now it is acknowledged that “because” is the right translation.

But the question remains: Whose sinning is this, the individual’s or A dam’s? Did all sin when Adam sinned? Or is Paul saying that all sinned individually? There are three main reasons to show that individual sinning is described here.

First, the phrase “in A dam” is not used here, and there is no need to introduce it in the text. In fact, verse 12 does not explicitly say that A dam sinned, but that he gave sin access to the world.

Second, the verb “to sin” is used by Paul to designate only actual personal sin, not to his or her participation in the sin of A dam (e.g., Rom. 2:12). We must be careful about introducing a usage of the verb into this text that is not Pauline.

Third, in order to elucidate the meaning of the phrase “all sinned” it would be good to find another passage in which Paul uses it. Romans 3:23 also designates the actual sins of the human race as argued in Romans 1:17-3:26. The idea of Gentiles and Jews sinning in A dam is absent from those chapters. The past tense, “sinned,” describes an act that is valid for all times, that is, sinning characterizes all humans throughout history.

Death is universal because sin is universal. Through A dam’s trespass sin came into the world as an enslaving power, and no one, except Christ, has been able to escape its control. As a result of A dam’s act, sin is inevitable for the human race. As the representative of the race, A dam had an impact on all his descendants. We exist in solidarity with him as our common ancestor; sin rules over us.

The good news is that Christ defeated the enslaving power of sin and there is no reason whatsoever for anyone to be controlled by this evil power (Rom. 5:18). His justifying grace is available to all who, through faith, accept it (verses 17, 19). Glory be to God!

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Wantok. I heard the word everywhere. “They are waiting at the airport for a wantok.” “I need to see my wantok in the bank.” “If we had a wantok in the office, maybe we could solve the problem.”

I anticipated exotic sights and strange words. After all, I am in Papua New Guinea. But the usage of this word wantok seemed to carry weighty overtones of identification and responsibility beyond my Western understanding.

“A wantok means someone from your area who speaks your language,” explained Thomas, a friend from the mission office. “A literal translation would be ‘one talk.’ If I see a man from Sepik in Port Moresby, I say, ‘I saw a wantok in the city,’ because I am from the Sepik. It is a coming together, a oneness. Unity.”

I like that very much. Speaking the same language. Unity. Community. Identification with your group. And what is expected of a wantok? They are supportive, helpful, encouraging, connected to me, because we are “one.”

If I lose my job, my wantoks will bring food and help take care of my family. If there is a problem or delay with a business application, I appeal to my wantok who works in that office, and the wantok becomes the inside contact, the one who speaks for me and tries to solve my problem. If I get in trouble, a wantok who knows the police chief will plead for leniency. At a women’s gathering I met an American who introduced me to her Australian friends as her wantoks.

The far-reaching obligations of wantoks were clearly demonstrated during the tidal wave tragedy in Papua New Guinea. In towns all over the country people marched up and down the streets in huge support rallies for their wantoks in the stricken area, pushing wheelbarrows and pleading for donations. And even though the mission was conducting its own relief campaign, Thomas marched with the townpeople because his wantok needed and expected his support.

Wantoks defend each other with unwavering loyalty. If I get in a fight, provoked or not, my wantoks will come to my aid. I’ve never heard anyone ask, “Are you my wantok?” Everyone just seems to know. It is important to know. It may save my life to know.

Suddenly familiar texts in the Pidgin Bible brightened with new meaning.

In the story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10) Jesus defines my neighbor as my wantok. Therefore, I would stop to help no matter how inconvenient, messy, or costly. And I stick with that neighbor until all his or her needs have been met.

Jesus reminds us (Matt. 5:43, 44) how easy it is to love our neighbor (wantok), but that when God rules our hearts, we love our enemies the same way. In Matthew 19:19 we are admonished to honor our father and mother, and to love our neighbor (wantok) as our self.

My favorite Pidgin usage is in Matthew 22:39 (NASB). “The second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” Or “Yu mas laikim ol wantok olsem yu laikim yu yet” (BUKBABIEL). (You will catch the translation if you read this phonetically—“You mus likem all wantok all same you likem you yet.” That wasn’t difficult, was it?)

If such a concept were truly practiced in our churches—every member believing that through the saving and reconciling blood of the Lamb we have become wantok—we would amaze the world with a unity and oneness that mirrors the “one accord” of the early believers in the upper room on the day of Pentecost. In our outreach, the love and attendant support and togetherness of wantok would be extended to neighbors, the unsaved, and the enemy. And in our personal lives, for every place of difficulty, we would rest in the blessed assurance that Jesus is our Wantok, who pleads on our behalf, who has an “in” with the Judge, who was born in our home area, who spoke our language, lived among us, and triumphantly fought our battle with sin.

Observing this earthly demonstration of “one talk”—a language of loyalty, love, togetherness, and unity—all humanity would know we are His disciples (John 13:35).

We are wantok.

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