Ken McFarland: 
10 Lessons Cancer Taught Me

Touched by Angels

Jesus and the Critics

Sandra Doran: Medical Ethics
First Advent of Christ
I am constantly amazed at how blessed we are to have the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy. Ellen G. White's "The First Advent of Christ" (Dec. 25), though written 125 years ago, is still as fresh and new as if it were written this past week. The layout was very attractive, and I just wish you would include a similar article in every edition that you print.

God's love and the excitement of His second coming were instilled in my heart as a child when I began reading Ellen's inspirational materials. When I wandered in the world as a prodigal son, it was remembering her description of God's mercy and forgiveness that gave me the courage to return to the Father's house. I returned to Him two years ago—January 6, 1996!

There are others like me still out there. Please provide more of Ellen White's articles that reach out, telling of God's love, acceptance, and forgiveness. He is coming back soon, and He wants us to be saved, not lost! This is the message that we all need to hear.

—Benjamin Anderson
VIA E-MAIL

Help! I need a theologian.
What is the true status of God the Son in His relationship to God the Father? In "The First Advent of Christ," the first sentence states: "The Son of God was next in authority to the great Lawgiver." The last sentence describes Christ as "the Majesty of heaven, equal with God."

Thanks for the extra effort you have put into the Review during the past several years. It was always good; now it's great!

—Darryl Comstock
LAWAI, HAWAII

Your question is too important to attempt an answer here. But we'll keep it in mind for possible future treatment. —Editors.

Much More Than 10 Percent
Regarding Dixil Rodriguez's "New Church Roofs for Africa" (Dec. 25). As a recently returned missionary who has served 11 years in Africa, I rejoice at the growth in churches in that great continent. This is wonderful news, and is the Lord's doing.

The article states that "currently Adventists in Africa total more than 10 percent of the entire world church membership." They do indeed—much, much more than 10 percent! The more than 2.5 million members in Africa make up more than 27 percent of the 9.2 million members worldwide. Much more significant, wouldn't you say?

—Colin Richardson
TOTtenHAm, NEW SouTH WALES, AUSTRALIA

Christmas Chronology

Some readers will be interested to know that we often make the mistake of thinking that the visit of the Wise Men was within the same time frame as the visit of the shepherds. A little calculation will show that the journey from a far-off country could have taken up to two years (hence Herod's decree to have all male children 2 years and under killed). Thus when the Wise Men arrived, according to Matthew 2:11, Jesus was no longer in

Jesus Didn't Scream
I must take exception to the James Dittes' December 25 news commentary, "Only Four Shopping Days to Go." With all his very colorful verbs, Dittes completely misrepresents the character of God.

First, Jesus did not "scream." He didn't have to. Describing the scene as Jesus entered the Temple, Ellen White writes, "The silence becomes painful" (The Desire of Ages, p. 158). Second, He definitely did not "shove" anyone out of the way. You won't find that anywhere in the Bible or in the Spirit of Prophecy. Jesus asked the people to leave, and they could hardly wait to comply, so full of fear were they. Neither did Jesus "rage" or "storm" through the Temple. All of these verbs portray Christ as being out of control, something He never was. He was always in complete control.

—Walter D. Sumner
CANAAN, MAINE

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—Walter D. Sumner
CANAAN, MAINE
the manger, nor was He still a baby. The descriptors used are “house” and “young child.”

—Ray Puen
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Keeping the X in Christmas (cont.)
Thank you to Stephen Chavez for his “Let’s Keep the X in Xmas” (Dec. 11). Ever since I was young I felt that the X was the unknown factor. This was stressed during algebra, and for many years I would not write Xmas in any correspondence, as I felt that it was degrading to our Saviour.

How we cherish things through the years without ever checking for ourselves. I will now consider it an honor to write Xmas during the holidays.

—Phyllis Alexander
RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA

Losing a Child
I can totally relate to Sandra Doran’s December 18 article, “Losing a Child.” My 18-year-old son was shot and killed. The pain never goes away— it’s been three and a half years, and I still weep when I think of him.

But there is hope. I’m impatiently waiting for the Lord to come, restore our loved ones to us, and put an end to all our miseries. As Sandra said, “the bond will never again be broken.”

—Carolyn Casey
HEMET, CALIFORNIA

Unacceptable Behavior
Regarding Donald E. Casebolt’s January NAD Edition letter, in which he said, “There are times when God’s church has to say ‘that kind of behavior is not acceptable’” I wonder how we are to judge where someone’s heart is? If I didn’t smoke, what would my unacceptable sin be then? How long is too long to have unacceptable sin? Does Christ put a time limit on it? I am so grateful that people aren’t God. There would be no one in heaven.

—Kathie Doben
VIA E-MAIL

Situational Ethics
Jan Haluska’s “In Christ There Are No Moral Dilemmas” (July 1997 NAD Edition) and Roy Adams’ “In Defense of Rahab” (December 1997 NAD Edition) present opposing opinions about the morality of “situational ethics.” Each author presented his views clearly and challenged my thinking.

I would like to suggest God is just as accessible to us when we’re confronted by a tough situation as He is when we’re kneeling by our beds at night. In Mark 13:11 Jesus tells us not to plan our words beforehand. The same verse contains this promise: “Whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.”

God will tell you what to do. God will tell you what to say. If you relinquish your agenda to Him, the almighty King of the universe will take you by the hand and lead you in the way that you should go (see Prov. 3:5, 6). All you have to do is ask.

—Denise Edwards
CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE

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NEXT WEEK
Doctor of Hope
The latest scientific aid for helping smokers kick the habit is being developed by an Adventist.
My mom and dad seem to think that just because people my age say things differently and ask tough questions that we don’t have much of a relationship with God. That’s not it at all. My parents are the ones who taught me about Jesus in the first place. I haven’t forgotten. I’m just trying to make it my own.
Christiansity makes an astounding assertion: Jesus of Nazareth, whom His followers confess as Lord and Saviour, was God incarnate (see my previous editorial in this series, “The Enigma of Jesus,” Jan. 22, 1998).

That claim offended the Jews, who regarded it as the ultimate blasphemy, and aroused the scorn of the pagans, to whom the concept of the Eternal One dying on a Roman cross was the ultimate nonsense. Nevertheless, Christianity stood its ground, survived, and in time triumphed over its critics. But in our day Jesus’ deity is once again under attack—now, however, by scholars out of a Christian background.

The roots of the modern critique reach back some 200 years to the Enlightenment, that outburst of rationalism that rejected traditional religious, social, and political ideas. A new way of looking at the world and its history came into vogue—as a closed system of cause and effect, available to study and wholly rational explanation. No need to postulate miracles, the supernatural, or God to understand the world—careful study and reason were sufficient of themselves.

Before long, theologians and theology were caught up in the spirit of the times. Scholars, devoting themselves to recapturing the historical Jesus, produced dozens of “lives” of Jesus in what became the consuming passion of nineteenth-century theology. This quest of the historical Jesus focused on Jesus as a man, not as the God-man. And ultimately it failed: every “life” of Jesus made Him after the image of the German professor or French teacher who wrote it.

For most of the twentieth century, scholars abandoned the attempt to discover the historical Jesus. They regarded the Gospels as factually unreliable, the products of Christian communities; they rejected miracles, the supernatural, and belief in Jesus as the Word made flesh. Under the powerful influence of theologian Rudolf Bultmann they drew a sharp line between Jesus—about whom, they asserted, we can know almost nothing—and the Christ worshiped by the early church.

As we come to the dawn of a new century, another wave of research into the historical Jesus is attracting attention. The America-based Jesus Seminar holds that we can discover far more about Jesus than Bultmann contended; nevertheless, it proceeds on the basis of the same assumptions that have ruled critical scholarship for 200 years: the Bible is wholly human, nothing more, as is Jesus; history is a closed system, without divine intervention; and reason alone is sufficient. Small wonder that the figure who emerges from the Jesus Seminar is anything but God in the flesh and the Saviour of the world.

As a doctoral candidate in New Testament theology, I waded through the scholarly literature on Jesus of the past 200 years in German, French, and English. Most of it seemed to me like a mighty lot of sluicing for precious few specks of gold. Take away the divine element from the Bible and you eviscerate it; leave out faith from the study of Jesus and you cannot get Him right.

Further, the scholars overlook these commonsense facts:

1. The accounts of Jesus circulated early and widely. Even by the scholars’ own reckoning, the Gospel of Mark was written within a generation of Jesus’ death—which gave plenty of time for eyewitnesses to point out errors.

2. The Gospels present a unique literary form. Part biography, part instruction, they focus attention on the person who dominates each of them—Jesus. All give disproportionate space to the final week of His life, with His execution and subsequent resurrection. No other documents like them have appeared in human history: they are unique because Jesus was unique. To counter their influence, the pagans produced a pseudo-Gospel based on Apollonius of Tyana, but they failed, because Apollonius was no Jesus.

3. How to explain the rise and growth of the church if Jesus was only a storyteller? Why would His followers even believe that He rose from the dead after they saw Him executed? Surely that reconstruction strains credulity.

I opt for faith in Jesus over faith in human theories. I believe with the early church that “without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16).

Coming March 19—Adventists and Jesus’ Deity
It's true. I'll never be a man. But why can't I be rich? Often I have talked to the Lord about this. “Now hear me,” I say. “If You would show me how to access a lot of money, I'd be really generous—you know, feed the hungry, clothe the naked. That sort of thing. I wouldn't keep much for myself. Oh, maybe pay off the mortgage, help the family, put some in savings. I'd handle it right. No worry.”

So far He hasn't seen fit to trust me with a lot of wealth—and He probably has His reasons. But I still dream, and I've developed a plan. He already knows about it, but you do not, so I'll share it with you:

First of all, I'd pay tithe. To the local conference. This would support pastors, evangelists, and the programs the local leaders have developed—evangelism, education, Community Services, and Vacation Bible School, for instance. Then—

If I were rich, I'd build centers all over the world for homeless, hungry, neglected children. They'd be located near our academies and colleges so the students could work there to help defray college expenses. More important, involvement in this ministry would indelibly etch in the hearts of those who serve how love begets love.

If I were rich, I'd fund centers in cities for single mothers to teach them how to care for babies and how to love them. (In an article on Project HOPE [Health Opportunities for People Everywhere] the Washington Post's Parade magazine spoke about a young 17-year-old mother who didn't want her baby, didn't know how to hold her or change or feed her, and who was unable to show affection because she'd never had any herself.) Our centers would also accommodate latchkey children for such after-school activities as learning to paint, perform, sing, cook. They would enjoy birthday parties, take field trips, participate in gymnastics, and have the availability of tutors. They would be safe and loved and would grow with their accomplishments.

If I were rich, I'd fund evangelistic activities aimed at the secular population of the world—the millions who do not know of Jesus the Christ (or even who Seventh-day Adventists are) and who may not want to know of Him. We'd hire dedicated, creative, daring, broad-minded men and women to do an “aggressive work.”¹² (We'd make the point that spending the greater portion of evangelistic funds for reaching those who already know Christ is not good enough.)

If I were rich, there would be lifestyle events, such as health fairs in malls and seminars featuring vegetarian cooking, coping with stress, and how to stop smoking as an “entering wedge.” (We do these already, but we'd do more of them.) We'd work with cable TV to present lifestyle-related programs and buy time to sponsor and host radio talk show programs featuring health topics. We'd bring qualified lifestyle professionals to major centers as guests on our program and participants in city health-related events.

If I were rich, money would be available for the support of the North American Division plan for awareness advertising. Now, though, it would become a worldwide project. There's not much point in inviting people to our church when they've never heard of us—and if they know anything about us at all, many know only wrong information: we don't take blood transfusions; our headquarters are in Utah. People would find our name “in their face” via billboards, bus shelter stops, radio and TV advertising, and newspaper ads. This would publicize these events, and the city leaders and populace would not only know what we are doing for them but who we are.

We'd establish more city centers than now exist, from which we could go into the less attractive areas of the cities and feed and clothe those who are in need. Qualified individuals would teach how to budget, how to be frugal, how to have a balanced diet with a lower-than-average income, how to remake clothing, how to look for work, and how to parent. There would be funds for computer classes for young men and women who have no training for employment. We'd bring them hope through tangibles.

That's my dream.

¹ Herbert Kupferberg, “They Teach Others How to Take Care,” Parade, Dec. 21, 1997, pp. 6-8.
² Evangelism, p. 59.
³ Gospel Workers, p. 345.
ADVENTIST LIFE

About the time our grandson, Peter, was learning to read, he was put to bed one night with instructions to turn out the lights and go to sleep. Peter turned out the lights... and began enjoying his book by flashlight under the covers.

Coming upon an unfamiliar word, Peter realized that, considering the circumstances, it wouldn't be wise to ask his mother for help. The next day he related to his teacher that he had said, "God, You'll just have to help me with this one," at which point God replied, "Peter, just sound it out."

— Dr. and Mrs. Robert Fulton, Lebanon, Oregon

The Newberg, Oregon, church family recently moved into its beautiful new sanctuary after a dedicated congregation (including our son Reg) volunteered most of its Sundays and many evenings over the past four years. This period covered most of the living memory of our almost-6-year-old granddaughter Lisa.

Recently Lisa came to visit us. Full of chatter while going to town, she and Grandpa passed the construction site of a partially completed Unitarian church. Grandpa mentioned that it was going to be a new church, prompting Lisa to whirl quickly toward Grandpa and ask, "Shouldn't you be helpin' um?"

— Myrna Mass, Salem, Oregon

ADVENTIST QUOTES

"Often those around you become hopeless only because you lose hope in them."

— Heidi Geisinger, Clifton, Tennessee

"In our quest for saving souls for Christ, we must see ourselves as lifeguards and not sunbathers on the beach."

— Pastor Alan DeSilva, to the Takoma Park, Maryland, church

"These holding the following offices are regularly included as members of the board: church administrator, clerk, pastors, head deacon, dead deaconess..."

— from a nominating committee report at the Gentry, Arkansas, church

HOW DO YOU TEACH ADVENTIST HERITAGE?

Passing on the stories is beneficial to any family. For the Adventist family, it’s no different.

The Review would like to know: How do you pass on the stories of God's leading in this church? What approaches work best for children? students? new members?

Send ideas to Teaching Adventist Heritage at the Give & Take address below. We'll print many of them in a future issue.

ADVENTIST LIFE

Hey, kids! Herald the Review angel is back, and Herald's trumpet is again hidden somewhere in this magazine.

In our last contest (Jan. 15 Cutting Edge Edition), the three winners were Thomas Wagner from Hudson, New York; Julie Gutman from Lincoln, Nebraska; and Rebecca Wong from Santa Rosa, California. Thomas, Julie, and Rebecca received Guide's Greatest Stories, compiled by Randy Fishell.

Where was Herald's trumpet? In the graphic on page 13.

If you can find the trumpet this time, send a postcard telling us where to Herald's Trumpet at the Give & Take address below. The prize is Secrets of The Forest, by Colleen L. Reece.

Have fun searching—and keep trumpeting Jesus’ love!
Touched by Angels

The hype is on, and angels are cropping up everywhere.

BY MANUEL VASQUEZ

Polls indicate that almost 70 percent of adult Americans believe in angels. That translates into almost 200 million Americans. And half the world's population, or an estimated 3 billion people, accept the existence of angels. "If there is such a thing as a universal idea, common across cultures and through the centuries, the belief in angels comes close to it."3

Angelmania

We seem to be facing today an explosion of angels, visible and invisible—archangels, guardian angels, healing angels, female angels, little chubby naked baby angels, and even angels of death. The past decade has seen a proliferation of angel art, poetry, books, ceramic figurines, movies, TV programs, plays, boutiques, newsletters, and seminars. Even higher centers of learning such as Harvard Divinity School and Boston College offer courses on angels.

How should we respond to this contemporary obsession? It would seem to me that at a time when many are preoccupied with the subject, Adventists need to seize every opportunity to focus the minds of people around us to the right questions: What exactly is the nature of angels? What is their mission in heaven and here on earth? What does the Bible teach about them? But first let's take a brief look at what's been going on.

Angels in the Movies

The recent angel craze has prompted Hollywood and the American TV networks to produce angel movies to meet popular demand. We now have such titles as Angels in the Outfield, The Preacher's Wife, and Michael.

In the movie Michael, the angel is depicted as a beer-guzzling, womanizing, intemperate slob. These characteristics, plus the angel's disgusting eating habits and unkempt personal appearance, leave even hardened cynics blinking in disbelief.

John Travolta's portrayal of Michael should be revolting to any Christian who stops to reflect on the identity and function of the biblical Michael. The name in Hebrew literally means "who is like God?" and is actually one of the names of Christ (Rev. 12:7). As regards His function, Michael is mentioned five times in the Bible, and in each reference He is defending the saints against their foes or fighting the dragon (the devil; see Dan. 10:13; 10:21; 12:1; Jude 9; and Rev. 12:7). In that last reference Michael and His angels fight and defeat the devil and his angels, casting them out of heaven.
I wonder what the Hindus and the Buddhists would do if Hollywood would portray Shiva, Krishna, the Buddha, or even the Dalai Lama in as sacrilegious a manner as they did the angel in Michael? I suspect members of these religious groups would not take it sitting down, with popcorn in their hands!

Angels on Television

Popular television programs portray angels as being eager to do good and wonderful deeds for people. However, such good deeds often happen without ever involving God or Christ or the Holy Spirit. In other words, such programs meet the demand for angel consciousness, contact, and work, but give a distorted concept of the role and function of the genuine heavenly commodity.

This was clear, for example, in the television series Highway to Heaven, which hit the airwaves in the mid-1980s. For while it’s true that many of the program’s episodes could be classified as moral, “innocent,” uplifting, and well-meaning, they also had the effect of introducing viewers to false concepts of the intervention of angels with humans, not to mention the false doctrines slipped in from time to time.

For instance, in one of the episodes the country preacher is addressing his local congregation Sunday morning with the angel (Michael Landon) present. “We are not here to judge, but to serve,” the preacher says. “You don’t have to believe in God to go to heaven. You just have to do ‘good.’ God is not looking for recognition.”

While the first part of that statement (about serving) is true, the rest is blatantly false and misleading. This is definitely New Age thinking.

In Touched by an Angel (a television series now running in the U.S.), streetwise Tess (Della Reese) and her band of angels apply “tough love” as they untangle the lives of individuals who are in deep trouble. But some of the program’s messages are themselves troubling. In one episode, for example, God had to make angel Monica temporarily blind so she could accept people as they are and not be prejudiced by their color. This is way out in left field—to think that heavenly beings are “prejudiced,” or that they need to learn lessons about color and race!

The subtle danger in the angel TV programs is that they are perceived as good, wholesome, family viewing programs to which Christians can give their stamp of approval. Thus we drop our mental defenses and reservations, and let the devil into our homes and lives “through the back door.”

Angel Seminars

One of those who’ve taken to running seminars on angels is Elizabeth Clare Prophet, a blatant New Ager. Essentially, Prophet’s position is that there are seven archangels, corresponding to the seven “rays” of light, better known to New Agers as the seven Hindu chakra energy areas and their corresponding colors. For example, the archangel Michael and Faith supposedly provide protection for travelers and correspond to the throat-chakra meditation, marked with a blue glowing color. When a person wants to contact Michael, there are a number of invocations, prayers, meditations, hymns, decrees, and mantras to assist them in doing so. There is even a song dedicated to Lord Krishna in Hindi.

On the back page of a booklet by Prophet (entitled Angels, Angels, Angels) a reading entitled “God’s Real in Me” ends with the following coda:

“I’m glad that I’m me,
I’m glad that I’m real,
I’m glad that I AM really God.”

The teaching that we are God (or that we are gods) is one of the tenets of the New Age movement.

The Attraction and the Danger

What are some of the reasons for this contemporary fascination with angels?

1. There’s a spiritual awakening taking place in society. People are looking for spiritual guidance, and angels play right into this need.

2. There’s a general assumption that angels are only benign. Somehow the concept of evil angels and the struggle between good and evil escapes the general public.

3. The misconception that humans
can interact with angels and have them do their bidding has led some people aggressively to seek them out.

4. A allegiance to an angel carries no personal or spiritual commitment to moral conduct on people’s part, as would be required by God.

The danger is that when people begin attempting to communicate with their “guardian angel,” there’s a strong possibility that this spiritual being will replace the authority of God in their lives. They come to believe that this so-called angel supplies them with all their spiritual needs, answers all their questions, and provides guidance and direction for their lives.

This can readily be seen by the way the current fad has been embraced and nurtured by the New Age movement. That’s because the idea of angel contact and consciousness is seen as logical extensions of the phenomenon of channeling universal entities or spirits.

There is every reason to be vigilant on this matter. None of us is immune to this kind of deception.

In this connection, I think about the case of Sharon Lee and Deborah Halstead, who joined a group of Adventists that claimed to be receiving messages and spiritual gifts from heavenly angels. Totally deceived by these demonic powers masquerading as heavenly angels, these two sisters, fourth-generation Adventists, were told to kill six people who, the message said, had become “totaled” (demon-possessed). They succeeded in killing only two of the six before being incarcerated. Today they’re serving time in an Oregon penitentiary for murder and other crimes.

Getting It Right

Most of the people interested in angels in the present craze are getting their information from every place except the Bible, the only true source of information on the subject.

According to the Bible, angels are “ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation” (Heb. 1:14, NIV). They were “created by God,” are “superior to men,” and act as messengers from God, interacting with humans in general, but especially with people who do God’s will and bidding. The word derives from the Hebrew mal’ak (G reek aggelos) and means “messenger.” It appears in the Bible approximately 300 times, in at least 24 books.

A matter of interest and comfort, it is well to remember that there are twice as many good angels as there are evil ones.” Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands” is how the good angels are described in Revelation 5:11. And Hebrews 12:22 speaks of “an innumerable company of angels.”

There must be billions of them. Said Ellen White: “When the earthborn children know it not, they have angels of light as their companions. A silent witness guards every soul that lives, seeking to draw that soul to Christ. A long as there is hope, until men resist the Holy Spirit to their eternal ruin, they are guarded by heavenly intelligences.”

In addition, “a guardian angel is appointed to every follower of Christ. These heavenly watchers shield the righteous from the power of the wicked one.”

Only three names of angels are recorded in the Bible: Michael (a reference to Christ), Gabriel, and Lucifer (who fell and became the devil). It is Lucifer, with his host of evil companions, who constantly works to destroy the people of this earth. “Evil spirits, in the beginning created sinless, were equal in nature, power, and glory with the holy beings that are now God’s messengers. But fallen through sin, they are leagued together for the dishonor of God and the destruction of men.”

In the last days the activity of these demon angels will increase. How can we protect ourselves against deception? We should bear in mind that—

1. Both good angels and evil angels have powers to perform miracles (Rev. 16:14) and occasionally appear in human form.

2. Heavenly angels are sent by God mainly to protect us from the evil one (Ps. 34:7). They are sent to do God’s bidding, not our own.

3. Heavenly angels do not bring “new light” to contradict the Word of God. No matter how beautiful the encounter with so-called heavenly beings, such experiences are not to supersede a “thus saith the Lord.”

4. Our safety lies in staying clear of anyone who claims to have the “gift” of speaking with angels or channeling them.

The biblical teaching of the existence of holy angels is a most comforting one, presenting these supernatural beings as our faithful and constant allies in the struggle between good and evil. We should pray constantly for the ability to discern between the angels of light and the angels of darkness, between those who would do us good and those whose every intention is evil.

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3 Gibbs, p. 58.


9 Ibid., p. 513.

Manuel Vasquez is vice president for special ministries for the North American Division, in Silver Spring, Maryland.
Defending against charges of human rights abuses, Chinese president Jiang Zemin said during his visit to the United States last year, “The theory of relativity worked out by Mr. Einstein, which is in the domain of natural science, I believe can also be applied to the political field. Both democracy and human rights are relative concepts and not absolute and general.”

With all due respect, President Jiang ought to stick to politics, not science. Einsteinian (special) relativity is, in fact, based on the immutability and universality of the laws of physics, which remain the same in all frames of reference in uniform motion.

Nevertheless, Jiang did raise an interesting point: Is there a universal moral code applicable to all people and nations, and if so, where must it come from?

The answer, of course, depends on your view of where we come from. If, indeed, we live in a totally materialistic universe, the result of blind forces alone, then the Chinese president has a point.

After all, who decides that one culture, moral code, or form of government is better than another? Herodotus wrote about one society in which offspring were morally obligated to eat the flesh of their dead fathers. In ancient India widows often immolated themselves on the funeral pyres of their deceased husbands. Hammurabi decreed that if the daughter of a gentleman dies as a result of being struck while pregnant, then the daughter of the striker should be killed. In ancient Rome unwanted babies were left out in the elements to die.

Now, if there are no universal moral principles that exist “above,” or even prior to, humankind, what gives us in the twentieth-century Western world the right to pass judgment upon these acts, no matter how repugnant they might seem? If good and bad, right and wrong, and other moral ideals are found not in God or in some eternal transcendence, but only in humanity itself—then morality is subjective, like a preference for the Spice Girls over Beethoven, or French bread over bagels. Some argue—quite logically, given their naturalistic premises—that we can’t “know” right and wrong (as we “know” 2 + 2 = 4), because right and wrong are mere arbitrary expressions based on emotional and cultural biases.

On the other hand, if a moral God has established a moral universe, then concepts of absolute right and wrong, good and evil, must exist apart from humanity and its own preferences. (Though some try to base morality in natural law, just about everything has been “justified” using natural law arguments.) Far from being nothing but what J. Fishkin calls “expressions of preference...attitudes or feelings;” moral principles—rooted in God—apply to everyone everywhere. This means that certain practices—no matter how traditional, cultural, or long-running—are right or wrong because a universal standard exists to judge them.

Of course, the belief in moral absolutes doesn’t solve humanity’s moral problems. For centuries people have stabbed, burned, shot, and imprisoned fellow human beings—all in the name of defending transcendent moral absolutes. Jesus Himself warned, “They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service” (John 16:2).

The other problem, unique to the American experiment of separation of church and state, is this: If moral absolutes can exist only in the Creator, how can we incorporate these absolutes, or at least the principles reflected by them, into our society without violating separation of church and state? If moral principles emanate from God, what happens to those who don’t believe in God, or whose view of His moral absolutes differs from others? Besides, what is the “mark of the beast” other than an attempt to enforce “eternal” moral principles upon those whose eternal moral principles differ from the majority?

President Jiang is wrong: moral absolutes do transcend cultures and nations. The challenge is determining not only what those absolutes are, but which ones should be enforced; and then finding a fair and equitable way of enforcing them on those whose moral values come from some source other than the true one.

Clifford Goldstein is editor of Liberty, a magazine of religious freedom.
Ten Lessons Cancer Taught Me
How Illness Changed My Life

BY KEN MCFARLAND

It’s arguably the most dreaded word in any language, a metaphor for sin itself, linked in the minds of most of us with suffering and untimely death. Cancer.

It’s a word you never want to hear applied to you in your doctor’s office. The blood in my veins turned to ice when I heard it on a gray December day near the end of 1996.

I’m glad now that I did. Painful and shattering as it’s been, I’m grateful for what this illness has taught me and how it has radically, profoundly changed my life. In stunned disbelief I looked at the MRI negatives hanging on the lighted view boxes. There it was—massive, menacing, sinister. A large sarcoma in the upper left thigh, the doctor said. I should prepare to lose my leg—or, if the cancer had spread elsewhere, to put my affairs quickly in order.

The biopsy confirmed a rare subtype of sarcoma—a type of cancer itself so rare as to account for only about half of 1 percent of all cancers.

Numerous scans and tests showed no spread of the cancer. The surgeon to whom I was referred recommended maximum chemotherapy—one week each month for three months—in an effort to shrink the tumor. He said he couldn’t make promises, but he intended to do all he could to save the leg.

After choking for a few days after each dose of chemo, the tumor shrugged off the treatment and came roaring back with a vengeance. It kept right on growing. Meanwhile, I
adjusted as well as I could to the inevitable side effects: loss of hair, nausea, debilitating fatigue—and an unwelcome ride on an emotional roller coaster.

In late March of 1997 the doctors surgically removed the tumor—an angry, aggressive invader that weighed almost 10 pounds and was larger than a football. I praised God that I still had both legs, though many of the muscles the tumor had invaded had to be removed.

Surprisingly, to my doctors, I soon began walking normally again. In a short time my hair grew back, softer and a bit lighter than before. Before long the doctors wanted to apply massive radiation to the thigh and continue maximum chemotherapy for another several months. I told them, “No thanks.”

For some, conventional cancer treatments (surgery, radiation, chemotherapy) may be the answer. I respect the knowledge, skill, and counsel of my physicians. Yet after much study, prayer, and reflection, I concluded that I wanted to pursue another avenue. Which is why I am writing this as I’m participating in the first-ever session of Weimar Institute’s new LIFESTEPS program for cancer patients and others whose immune systems have been compromised.

Weimar, a supporting institution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church located in California’s Sierra foothills, approaches lifestyle-related disease treatment employing NEWSTART—an acronym embodying the eight laws of health as set forth by Ellen White.

Years of lifestyle shortcomings, culminating in a single year of unprecedented stress, prepared the way for my cancer to appear and thrive. And it is my conviction that my best hope for combating and possibly reversing the cancer lies in rebuilding the immune system I allowed to become dangerously weakened. If the cancer ultimately overpowers me, it will be no fault of the eight health laws. It will be the result of my waiting too long to live consistently in harmony with them.

But what ranks as far more important to me than the choice of treatment for my disease is what it has taught me and how it has changed me.

Cancer has taught me what is really important. It has a way of suddenly illuminating life’s priorities with startling clarity. Climbing the ladder of career success, personal and professional achievements, making good money and accumulating a lot of things, being well known or even a household name—none of this truly matters much.


Cancer has taught me that every day—every moment—is a priceless gift to be treasured, savored, and lived to the fullest. A possibly limited supply of tomorrows runs the value of even one today into the stratosphere.

Cancer has taught me not to put off until “someday” things that are important or worth doing now. Procrastination is the all-too-real risk of deferring until perhaps too late the vital or worthwhile.

Whether it’s extending unconditional forgiveness, learning a new language, or taking daily steps to realize a lifelong dream, I must do it now—not later.

Cancer has taught me the surpassing value of little things. From my wheelchair I studied for several long minutes a tiny wildflower volunteering its way through the redwood chips in a planter outside my hospital’s cancer center. I admired its design, its symmetry, its riotous color, its intricacy. And I thanked the Creator, who had made both me and the flower.

Cancer has taught me not to race through life in a frenetic and desperate attempt to get everything done. It has forced me to take life at a more sane and leisurely pace—to take time for rejuvenation and reflection.

Cancer has taught me to take better care of myself. I can no longer ignore it when my body cries out
Cancer has taught me that it’s OK to express honest, genuine emotion. It has opened me up in ways I cannot even describe. I experience both fear and grief, joy and pleasure, far more profoundly now than ever before. The overwhelming emotional impact of a life-threatening disease must probably be experienced to be understood. Tears are now pretty much just a routine part of my day.

Cancer has taught me what God is really like. I’ve learned both that He is there for me and that He cares for me—more than I ever knew. He’s heard my prayers—and those of hundreds of others on my behalf—for healing. And if it can bring Him the greatest glory, I naturally want Him to heal me, convincingly and soon. Like every other son or daughter of Adam and Eve, I passionately want to live. And I’m going to fight for my life with every fiber of my being.

But God has also helped me understand that He cannot always do the most wise and loving thing for us by healing us. He can’t always take away our pain and trouble in this life, but He has promised always to be there in and through it with us. And He’s helped me understand that the only answer to that troubling, inscrutable question Why? is to be found in exploring the issues of the great controversy.

Cancer has taught me the enormous healing power of love and hope and a positive attitude. It has challenged me not simply to surrender to fear and loss and bad news, but to focus relentlessly on the truth that in Christ all things are possible.

Cancer has taught me how to face my own mortality. If the doctors are right, I could have no more than a year and a half remaining. They believe it is virtually certain that the sarcoma will recur soon. But I accept their prognosis as neither sure foreknowledge nor predestination.

Because of the resurrection hope, I don’t really fear death. It’s dying I don’t like. Death itself is like sinking under surgical anesthesia, only to awaken, seemingly with no interruption of consciousness, in the recovery room. Death is like stepping through a door from one room to another.

Dying, on the other hand, isn’t so easy. It means saying goodbye to people you care about deeply. It means mourning the loss of so much you still wanted to experience and accomplish. And with cancer it can mean an inexorable and often protracted journey of physical devastation and pain. Yet even in dying, I would have access to that golden and universally loved promise: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me” (Ps. 23:4, N K J V).

Maybe my doctors are right. If so, I still hope for enough time to get a few things done. There are relationships I want to see healed, books I want to write, people with whom I want to share what Jesus means to me and what He’s done for me.

But maybe the doctors are wrong. One certainty is that if God still has something He needs and plans for me to accomplish for Him in this life, I’ll be here until it’s done. In the meantime, as Martin Luther King, Jr., so eloquently said the day before he died, “I just want to do God’s will. And He’s allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I’ve looked over, and I’ve seen the promised land.” A nd what awaits us there is breathtaking—beautiful beyond description. If I live long enough, I want to write a book about that better place—heaven and the new earth.

I’d like to live until Jesus comes or until I die peacefully in my sleep in the year A.D. 2041 at 97 years of age—whichever comes first. But if I must leave early, I want you to assure me, my reading friend, that through trusting solely in the grace of Jesus, you’ll someday soon join me in a place utterly devoid of tears and pain, suffering and death. Will you promise me that?

Ken McFarland is special assignments editor for Coffey Communications in Walla Walla, Washington.

I’m going to fight for my life with every fiber of my being.
Diet and Cancer: Hearing It Again for the First Time

New research confirms the benefits of Adventist lifestyle.

BY DEBORAH KNOTT, M.S., R.D.

WITH ALL THE PAWING AND snorting in the row behind me, I figured it had to be Ferdinand the Bull or some folks anxious to sell him on the hoof.

The event was a conference I was attending entitled “Food, Nutrition, and the Prevention of Cancer: A Global Perspective,” held in Washington, D.C., last October. The conference unveiled a major report summarizing nearly four years and thousands of pages of published research on nutrition and cancer.

If you’re like many people, you become discouraged each time the news media reports the results of a new study regarding lifestyle and health, often with seemingly contrary conclusions to the last study. Depending on which study you pay attention to, dietary cholesterol levels are or aren’t critical for predicting heart health, and sodium intake should or need not be regulated for blood pressure control. The value of the effort undertaken by the World Cancer Research Fund and the American Institute for Cancer Research is that a group of more than 150 researchers from around the world scrutinized in excess of 4,500 scientific papers on diet and cancer. From this unprecedented survey breadth they were able to draw reliable conclusions and make recommendations.

Fact: Our dietary choices play a vital role in protecting us from cancer.

It’s estimated that following the dietary recommendations of the Diet and Cancer Project, along with staying physically active and maintaining a healthy weight, can reduce cancer incidence by 30 to 40 percent. On a global basis this means that 3 to 4 million cases of cancer each year could be prevented.

Simply eating the recommended five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day could by itself reduce cancer rates by more than 20 percent. And finally, making good dietary choices coupled with not smoking could potentially reduce cancer risk by an amazing 60 to 70 percent!

In their thoroughgoing report the researchers categorized...
The Diet and Cancer Project
Dietary Guidelines

The following is the “Advice to Individuals” presented in the report Food, Nutrition and the Prevention of Cancer: A Global Perspective. Based on an analysis of more than 4,500 research studies, these guidelines present the best advice currently available on actions to take for lower cancer risk.

1. Choose predominantly plant-based diets rich in a variety of vegetables and fruits, pulses (legumes) and minimally processed starchy staple foods.

2. Avoid being underweight or overweight and limit weight gain during adulthood to less than 5 kg (11 pounds).

3. If occupational activity is low or moderate, take an hour’s brisk walk or similar exercise daily, and also exercise vigorously for a total of at least one hour in a week.

4. Eat 400-800 grams (15-30 ounces) or five or more portions (servings) a day of a variety of vegetables and fruits, all year round.

5. Eat 600-800 grams (20-30 ounces) or more than seven portions (servings) a day of a variety of cereals (grains), pulses (legumes), roots, tubers and plantains. Prefer minimally processed foods. Limit consumption of refined sugar.

6. Alcohol consumption is not recommended. If consumed, limit alcoholic drinks to less than two drinks a day for men and one for women.

7. If eaten at all, limit intake of red meat to less than 80 grams (3 ounces) daily. It is preferable to choose fish, poultry, and meat from non-domesticated animals in place of red meat.

8. Limit consumption of fatty foods, particularly those of animal origin. Choose modest amounts of appropriate vegetable oils.

9. Limit consumption of salted foods and use of cooking and table salt. Use herbs and spices to season foods.

10. Do not eat food which, as a result of prolonged storage at ambient temperatures, is liable to contamination with mycotoxins.

11. Use refrigeration and other appropriate methods to preserve perishable foods as purchased and at home.

12. When levels of additives, contaminants and other residues are properly regulated, their presence in food and drink is not known to be harmful. However, unregulated or improper use can be a health hazard, and this applies particularly in economically developing countries.

13. Do not eat charred food. For meat and fish eaters, avoid burning of meat juices. Consume the following only occasionally: meat and fish grilled (broiled) in direct flame; cured and smoked meats.

14. For those who follow the recommendations presented here, dietary supplements are probably unnecessary, and possibly unhelpful, for reducing cancer risk.

Tobacco: Do not smoke or chew tobacco.

different factors in our diets as having a link with various types of cancer, using the terms convincing, probable, possible, insufficient evidence, or no relationship. Based on these findings, 14 dietary recommendations were made.

A quick look at the recommendations should reveal nothing surprising to Seventh-day Adventists. (See sidebar.)

The recommendations that were so upsetting to the contingent sitting behind me were number 1 and especially number 7: “If eaten at all, limit intake of red meat, to less than 80 grams (3 ounces) daily . . .” I learned from their name badges that they were representatives of a national meat lobbying group, and I understood instantly why they were disgruntled. The recommendation made it sound as though eating no red meat was preferable to using it in moderation. (Three ounces of meat is a small serving, indeed, when many people regularly eat four to eight ounces at one meal.) One questioner asked the presenter whether this was, indeed, the intent of the panel. He responded that because many people around the world don’t eat meat, the panel didn’t want to be in the position of advocating meat-eating, since there’s no benefit in starting to eat it. If the recommendation was written as “Choose up to three ounces of red meat daily,” some might think that red meat had to be included for good health. However, this simply isn’t so.

I’ve seen this mind-set in action many times. As a dietitian, I’ve had several lacto-ovo vegetarian Adventists who were concerned about heart health tell me that they had started eating fish several times a week or popping fish oil pills (which they can purchase along with shark cartilage at some Adventist Book Centers— but alas, that’s another article!) because they heard a recommendation to “choose fish at least three times a week.” This advice was primarily given to encourage meat eaters to use less red meat. There’s no reason why a vegetarian should have to start eating fish or fish oil capsules to improve heart health.

The Diet and Cancer Project report includes the scientific rationale for the recommendation regarding red meat. Based on their extensive study, it can be said confidently that diets containing substantial amounts of red meat (beef, lamb, and pork) probably increase the risk of cancers of the colon and rectum, and possibly increase the risk of cancers of the pancreas, breast, prostate, and kidney. Diets high in animal fat, of which red meat is an important source, possibly increase the risk of cancers of the lung, colon and rectum, breast, endometrium, and prostate.

In fairness, the panel is not saying that a person must be vegetarian to enjoy increased protection from
cancer. Diets that contain modest amounts of meat and other foods of animal origin can be designed to be consistent with the recommendations of the report. However, they were willing to state: “There is no essential lower limit of intake of any type of meat, and diets including no meat are not only compatible with good health and lower cancer risk, but may be preferred in some settings, especially when plant foods are abundant, reliable and varied.”

This is a remarkable statement from the scientific community. It wasn’t many years ago that vegetarianism was viewed suspiciously as a kind of fanaticism by some in the scientific community who are now embracing the health benefits of a vegetarian diet. Scientists are very reluctant to make public health recommendations without very strong evidence for benefit without a downside, and avoid recommending changes in lifestyle that could result in harming people in some unforeseen way.

A compelling reason for confidence in recommending a largely vegetarian lifestyle to population groups around the world is the evidence available from Seventh-day Adventist health studies that the vegetarian diet brings numerous health benefits. In addition to a reduced incidence of heart disease and most types of cancer, vegetarians enjoy increased longevity, with an average of six years’ benefit for men and three years’ advantage for women.

A finding from the Diet and Cancer Project report that may surprise some Adventists is that the absence of meat has less to do with the benefits seen than the inclusion of foods which have a protective effect. Vegetarians who simply omit meat but still eat mostly refined foods and high-fat dairy products, with few fruits and vegetables, aren’t going to experience the benefits of vegetarians who, with or without moderate use of eggs and low-fat dairy products, eat whole grains, legumes, abundant fruits and vegetables, and a moderate amount of nuts. Evidence of dietary protection against cancer is strongest and most consistent for eating styles that are high in vegetables and fruits. What is less well-understood is why this so. We do know that plant foods not only are rich in vitamins and minerals but also are rich in biologically active compounds known as phytochemicals. Some of these substances serve as antioxidants. Others bind and dilute carcinogens; trigger detoxification enzymes; stimulate the immune system; have antibiotic effects; and have other effects as well. Unfortunately, some of these substances are now available in capsule form, and consumers are duped into believing that they can gain all the advantages of eating the real foods by popping pills.

Phytochemical pills can’t hold a candle to the fruits and vegetables from the hand of the Creator that contain all these substances in perfect balance and correct combination with other substances. The scientific evidence on this point was strong enough to warrant recommendation 14 (see sidebar). Even though the news about nutrition and cancer prevention is encouraging, we know that a healthy lifestyle will not eliminate all risk of cancer. Some percentage of cancer incidence isn’t diet- or smoking-related. Each of us knows of lifelong Adventists who were great examples of our health message who did succumb to the ravages of cancer. While Adventists do die of cancer like the general population, the incidence is markedly lower, and often occurs later in life.

While I am not aware of any studies on the trends of vegetarianism in the church at large, anecdotal evidence strongly suggests a decline in the number of Adventists who espouse a nonmeat lifestyle. This is all the more concerning at a time when public attention is focusing on the health benefits of our lifestyle, including the vegetarian diet.

After years of being laughed at by the public for our promotion of a physically active vegetarian lifestyle, this is no time for us to lose our commitment to the very lifestyle that has provable blessings. So let’s hear it again for the first time: “Grains, fruits, nuts, and vegetables constitute the diet chosen for us by our Creator. These foods, prepared as simple and natural a manner as possible, are the most healthful and nourishing.”


To worship in a different culture and a different language and yet receive a rich spiritual blessing is evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

That's the way I felt this past fall after conducting a two-week evangelistic series in Surabaya, Indonesia. The meetings, sponsored by the Quiet Hour radio ministry, resulted in 61 baptisms in this predominantly Muslim city.

The Challenge

The people were very hospitable and pleasant. But the temperature of 90-plus degrees with high humidity made preaching very difficult. Moreover, this is an area where more than 50 Protestant churches were burned in the past year, where the homes of pastors have been destroyed, and where at least 12 individuals have lost their lives in out-and-out hate crimes. (No Aventist lives have been lost, nor have Aventist properties been burned, however.)

Most of the crimes were committed in daylight, and I was shown pictures of vandals removing property and torching buildings. Still, not a single person has been prosecuted for these acts of violence.

Severe Restrictions

The government openly supports religious freedom, but there are many restrictions. For example, one cannot build a church unless the local community agrees. And the seating capacity of a church building cannot exceed by much that church's membership in the particular community.

Permits for meetings can be obtained for only two weeks at a time, a condition that ensures a two-week limit on evangelism. A foreign evangelist is not permitted to bring a team. They must come solo—with no singing evangelists, Bible workers, health workers, or social service professionals.

Aventist leaders and influential church members offered strong support, however, for the evangelistic series. I was greatly encouraged. Since I could not speak the local language, I could do little more than preach. The evangelistic coordinator and most of the organizational and managerial positions were held by lay members who volunteered their services. James Zachary, from the Quiet Hour staff, also gave significant support.

I was told that most members really thought this meeting could never happen in this city of 2.5 million. But God still rewards the faith of His people.

Sad Stories

Family members were threatened against being baptized into the Aventist Church. Young people were told that they would be put out of their homes.

As I met with youth from non-Aventist families who were enrolled in our schools to learn English, they told sad stories about how they suffered for their newfound faith. Much prayer is needed for youth and wives who are willing to break with the past. More baptisms are expected as church members make follow-up visits to interested people.

Some major non-Aventist business leaders became very interested in the church when their children were baptized. A s one of our local Aventist leaders said: "This is nothing short of a miracle." I praise God for an opportunity to encourage those who encounter major opposition in advancing the cause of Christ.
Witnessing With California Flair

BY ERNIE MEDINA, JR., WHO WRITES FROM LOMA LINDA, CALIFORNIA

On November 2, in record-breaking heat, more than 180 Frisbee players from southern California converged at Loma Linda University's Drayson Center for the second annual Thanksgiving Ultimate Frisbee Tournament. Hosted by the Loma Linda Ultimate Frisbee Club, the tournament raised canned goods for needy families.

Nine teams participated in the tournament. The entry fee was three cans of food. For those three cans, players received access to five smooth playing fields, with restrooms on-site.

A local restaurant provided fruit and muffins at the lunch break. With an early sunset, the final play-off games were decided under lights. For those who came long distances, locker rooms, showers, and a swimming pool were available.

Janice Jung, the coordinator for the food bank at the Azure Hills Adventist Church, was overwhelmed at the 620-plus cans raised for the food bank. "This couldn't have come at a better time!" she said. "The food bank feeds 100 families on a regular basis, and right now we're in dire need of supplies, since our shelves are empty and we're broke!"

Sponsored by the Azure Hills church, the Loma Linda Ultimate Frisbee Club is probably one of the most unusual outreach and witnessing programs in North America. It gives Adventist players a chance to be "silent" witnesses to other players, as well as providing witnessing opportunities within the club. Players are able to develop friendships with non-Adventists, and since the club is associated with Loma Linda University, members have introduced many non-Adventists to the church.

Many players expressed thanks to Mike Tamada and the Loma Linda Ultimate Frisbee Club for hosting the tournament, with several commenting on how they enjoyed the coed format. The groups are all looking forward to next year.

Unrest Continues in Burundi

Ethnic violence continues to trouble the central African nation of Burundi, with attacks made against an Adventist school, reports Charles Montille, Africa-Indian Ocean Division secretary.

The Kivoga secondary school was attacked by rebels on December 13. The rebels took a staff member of the school hostage as they smashed windows and stole property, and did not release him until December 19.

Montille reports that the refugee situation is still critical, with continuing violence.

"I visited Bubanga, a village 41 kilometers [25 miles] north of Bujumbura, for food distribution by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency," says Montille. "The governor of the district told us that since last August 50,000 people have left their hiding places and come to settle in the village.

"The long months of hiding, sometimes in caves, have taken a toll on the health of adults and children. They have been accommodated in little mud huts covered with plastic sheets. There is a lack of water, food, and medicine. Every day there are deaths in the different camps. About 100,000 are still in hiding."

The Adventist Church continues to offer humanitarian aid under difficult circumstances, and pleads for reconciliation so the refugees may be helped to return to their homes.

"We call for peace in Burundi and an end to all forms of violence," said Lowell Cooper, an associate secretary of the General Conference. "The human tragedy must be stopped so that help can be made effective and healing can begin."—Adventist News Network.

Pentecost '98 Series Rescheduled for April

The Adventist Global Communication Network recently decided to delay the beginning of the Pentecost '98 evangelistic series from February 28 to April 25, reports Robert S. Folkenberg, General Conference president.

Pentecost '98 is the church's first satellite evangelistic series attempted on the continent of Africa. The speaker for the series is Fitz Henry, a lay evangelist from Jamaica. Henry's messages will be broadcast from the campus of Vista University in Soweto, South Africa, from April 25 to May 30.

Recent large orders for satellite equipment from churches across the continent caused the delay. Choosing to wait a few more weeks means that many more churches will be equipped to participate in the meetings. "Although this was a difficult decision to make, I
Affirmative Action’s Demise

BY JOHN V. STEVENS, SR., RETIRED DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY FOR THE PACIFIC UNION.

Affirmative action: the very phrase is loaded with social, economical, and political baggage.

California’s Proposition 209 shot the first big salvo to deny special consideration to those for whom education and employment opportunities have been extremely limited in the past—specifically women and racial minorities. And the bandwagon is picking up steam. Since Prop 209 several states have considered similar legislation.

Detractors of affirmative action claim that racial and gender discrimination has been sufficiently eliminated so as to make government-mandated policies, programs, and legal remedies unnecessary.

Lost (or overlooked) in the ensuing debate is that preferences in the workplace and in educational institutions were in fact an attempt to make up for years of real discrimination and neglect.

The popular appeal for “fairness” is nothing less than a populist appeal to self-exaltation. By definition the gospel is self-sacrifice—affirmative action, if you please. Those who walk with Christ don’t find it objectionable to give themselves, their means, even their positions to benefit the less fortunate. “In humility consider others better than yourselves,” said the apostle Paul (Phil. 2:3, NIV). And wasn’t it Jesus who said, “Whatever you did for one of the least of these, . . . you did it for me” (Matt. 25:40, NIV)?

Perhaps all this talk about “fairness” is nothing more than a sign of the times. If by a ballot or legislative act it can be decided who will benefit from the protections offered to society’s most vulnerable citizens, it suddenly becomes easier to imagine how a nation can go from caring to persecuting.

Disregarding elementary Christian values such as love and compassion is one step on the way toward this nation’s repudiation of the rest of God’s law.

ADRA Makes Nepalese Children Smile

A 29-member medical team from the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Japan performed 52 surgical operations on children in Nepal between November 16 and December 3.

Under the theme “Help Nepalese Children Smile,” medical volunteers corrected abnormal mouth and lip problems, including hare lips and cleft palates, at the ADRA Center in Kathmandu.

Each patient received psychological counseling after surgery, and many told of discrimination or shame experienced as a result of their mouth abnormalities. Now after the corrective operations, they were confident of a “whole new life,” according to Toshiya Tsukamoto, director of ADRA Japan.

“The smiles on the faces of these Nepalese children were the best souvenirs for the Japanese volunteers,” said Tsukamoto. The Japanese Foreign Ministry helped fund the project with a contribution of US$37,500. The Japanese ambassador to Nepal visited the team and expressed the desire for increased cooperation between the Japanese government and ADRA Japan.—Adventist News Network.

Polish Ambassador Honors GC Official

Bert B. Beach, director of interchurch relations at the General Conference, was honored at a ceremony at the Polish Embassy in Washington, D.C., on January 23.

Citing his “important role in religious liberty and human rights around the world,” Jerzy Koźmiński, Polish ambassador to the United States, bestowed on Beach the Knight’s Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland, the highest honor afforded to someone who is not Polish.

“With this honor we express our gratitude and appreciation for Dr. Beach’s efforts to develop and foster friendship between Poland and the United States,” said Ambassador Koźmiński.
More Americans Believe in God, Miracles

Today more Americans believe in God and miracles, according to a new poll by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press.

This year 71 percent of Americans polled said they have never had moments of doubt about the existence of God. In 1987, 60 percent of respondents said they had such absolute confidence.

The number of respondents expressing their confidence that God is the power behind miracles rose to 61 percent in 1997, a significant increase from 47 percent a decade ago.

The number of respondents who describe prayer as an important part of their daily lives increased from 41 percent in 1987 to 53 percent this year. The poll also found that 64 percent believe everyone will be called before God to answer for their sins on judgment day, compared to 52 percent in 1987.

The poll of 1,165 adults was taken in a telephone survey November 5-9, 1997, and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percent.—Religion News Service.

Eighteen months before the outbreak of World War II in Europe, Adventists were gravely concerned about threats to constitutional liberties at home.

Charles S. Longacre, writing in the March 3, 1938, edition of the Review, warned of more than 30 bills then pending in Congress that deliberately sought to deprive the United States Supreme Court of the right to declare an act of Congress unconstitutional. The crisis atmosphere engendered by nine years of severe economic depression in the United States was tempting some congressmen to abandon constitutionally guaranteed liberties in order to secure a stronger central government, not unlike what had already occurred with Fascist regimes in Germany, Italy, Spain, and Japan.

Longacre warned of specific bills in the Seventy-fifth Congress that sought to (1) restrict citizens' rights to publish anything against the doctrines of another church; (2) alter the weekly calendar of seven days once each year, and twice during leap years; (3) restrict interstate transportation and sale of products, including religious publications. Adventists correctly saw in these bills threats to public evangelism, Sabbathkeeping, and door-to-door literature ministry.
A Review correspondent recently placed an issue in my lap that I have reflected upon for two months. "I should be most grateful if you would write in your Dialogues regarding the issue of the integrity and ethics of health professionals."

My hesitancy in responding to his letter stems from my own lack of experience in the health-care field. As an educator I’m faced with issues of integrity and ethics surrounding student papers, the placement of children with special needs, parenting questions, educational labeling, and the proper use of testing instruments.

And as Seventh-day Adventist Christians, each of us confronts moral dilemmas specific to our own domain. The businessperson deals with issues of bottom-line figures and net worth and appropriate tithing practices; the advertising executive battles over products to endorse and Sabbath observance and functions to attend.

My sense is, though, that those most qualified to respond to the preceding question are those directly involved in medical ministry. While the questions I battle over may affect my students for life (if I assign a low grade to a student teacher, she may never have the opportunity to teach; if I assign an inflated grade, her future students will have to pay the price), I never struggle with issues relating to the continuance or termination of life itself.

In keeping with the spirit of Dialogues, I’m requesting responses to our brother’s letter from Seventh-day Adventist Christians, each of us confronting moral dilemmas specific to our own domain. The businessperson deals with issues of bottom-line figures and net worth and appropriate tithing practices; the advertising executive battles over products to endorse and Sabbath observance and functions to attend.

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In keeping with the spirit of Dialogues, I’m requesting responses to our brother’s letter from Seventh-day Adventists directly involved in the medical field: nurses, doctors, administrators, and others. In thinking about the following questions, consider your own life experiences. Beyond a theological polemic, it would be helpful to hear about specific incidents that put your Christianity, professionalism, and humanity to the test. In order to protect those directly involved, please change any identifying data and tell us your stories. Use the following questions to help get you started in reflecting upon pertinent life experiences to share:

- What is the most challenging issue you have faced as a Christian in the field of health care?
- To whom did you look for guidance and support?
- On what did you ultimately base your decision?
- How did the family or individuals involved respond?
- How did others in the field (Adventist and non-Adventists) respond?
- If you had to face this dilemma again, would you make the same decision?
- What are the most important issues that you consider in making difficult decisions in your work?
- What broad principles in regard to integrity and ethics guide your work?

I encourage health-care professionals from around the world to E-mail or mail their stories to help illuminate the discussion that will be published within the next few months. In the meantime, all of us would do well to examine "the issue of integrity and ethics" as it applies to our current station in life.

As you hold this Review in your hands, think about the ways in which you bring your Christianity into your work or life’s calling. Are there times when you hold back, fearful of offending others or bringing issues to light that will expose you as different, odd, or overly zealous? Are there issues that you ignore simply because it’s more comfortable to say nothing than to address prejudice, bias, or inequities in the workplace? When does personal conviction become public opportunity?

If you could make one moral difference in your arena of influence, what would it be? Who would you impact? How would your sense of integrity motivate you? Ethically, what is your obligation to the people whose lives you touch?

All of us live and move in a world of people. The things we say, the choices we make, the actions we do or do not take, carry moral and ethical implications. Let’s all commit to fine-tuning our sensitivity to these issues as we await the response of the Seventh-day Adventist medical community to the questions posed in this month’s column.

Sandra Doran may be contacted through the Adventist Review or via E-mail at 74617.713@compuserve.com. She requests responses to this column within the next four weeks.
Living in the Present Tense

Not knowing what the future holds, Jan and Art Stonebraker make the most of present opportunities.

BY MARILYN MORGAN

Skillfully threading her electric three-wheeler through each door, Jan Stonebraker, with her husband, Art, visits the Nevada County Jail in Colfax, California. “How are you, Jan?” the inmates ask. “Fine” is her standard answer, although Jan’s cheerful smile belies the illness that keeps her confined to a wheelchair and may eventually take her life.

Called to Serve

Art and Jan moved to California in 1990 because of Jan’s illness, scleroderma—a chronic inflammation of the body’s connective tissue. In spite of the fact that Jan’s condition left her unable to walk or to use her left arm, the Stonebrakers searched for a ministry in which they could serve together. After much thought and prayer, plus seeing an exhibit by a prison ministry called “Touch of Love,” Art and Jan decided to begin a ministry to prisoners. It was an obvious choice, since Art already had a job working for the California Department of Corrections.

Thus was born COPE—Christian Outreach Prison Evangelism. It began small, with Art and Jan visiting inmates at the Nevada County Jail. Nearly a year later the Stonebrakers organized their ministry under the umbrella of the Colfax church’s personal ministries department. Expanded opportunities eventually led 10 other members and one former inmate to help visit the inmates and give Bible studies. Two women in the church write letters to inmates who have requested correspondence.

“How’s Jan?” is most often the first question inmates ask the COPE volunteers when Jan is absent. The question is always followed by fervent murmurs of “Tell her we’re praying for her.” Perhaps because Jan has to endure her own form of imprisonment, many of the inmates feel a natural rapport with her. Jan’s assurances of God’s love and care lend an authenticity to her witness that can’t be duplicated by visitors who are healthy, successful, and free of disabilities.

Team Effort

Art, perennially cheerful, leads Bible studies, organizes schedules, trains new team members, and makes certain that every team member is supplied with Bible lessons that Jan often writes herself. Jan also ministers to the inmates and their families in the form of faith-filled, encouraging letters.

Inmates phone Jan for encouragement—collect, of course (those are
the only kinds of long-distance calls inmates are allowed. Conversations usually revolve around the callers’ needs and problems, but whenever they ask about her, Jan always answers that she’s “fine.”

Sometimes Jan is really too ill to leave home, but, Art says, “she bites the bullet, and with the Lord’s help, she goes to jail on her scheduled Sabbaths.”

The value of Art and Jan’s Christian influence is incalculable. Many testify of the changes the Stonebrakers’ friendship and witness have made in their lives. “Jan put thanks in my heart,” says one inmate named Jeff. “Her letters are an inspiration—a great gift. She radiates positive inspiration.”

Another inmate, Terry, remarked, “Her Christlike presence has inspired me and shown me the peace, joy, and love that God can bring to my life. Jan showed me how not to be discouraged.”

During one 12-month period 668 inmates attended Bible studies at the county jail, and 2,076 Bibles, books, and tracts were given to them. In addition, 296 pieces of literature were mailed to inmates who had been transferred to state prisons. Busy letter writers sent 1,350 letters to both groups and received 292 letters in return.

“Thank you so much for the letter and tracts,” wrote one inmate. “It’s very comforting to know people still care. Most people wouldn’t give you the time of day, so thanks again.”

Another inmate wrote, “Most of us don’t get mail except from COPE. Thank you for the studies, your letters, your kind thoughts, and your prayers.”

“Thank you for the Bible study last weekend,” began another letter. “You guys are great! I’ll be looking forward to next week’s study. The last one made me feel so good. I thank God and you for that. See you next week.”

To Be Continued

As the weeks turn into months, Jan’s health steadily declines. If anyone has reason to give up on witnessing, it’s the Stonebrakers. But Art and Jan and the prison ministry they organized continue to minister to those who find themselves with lots of time to reflect on the course of their lives.

And if Art and Jan can rise above their misfortune through their faith in Christ and inspire that same faith in the people they meet from week to week, perhaps they can inspire someone reading this article to take advantage of present opportunities to become more involved in reflecting God’s love to the people in their sphere of influence.

Marilyn Morgan is the principal of Weimar Academy, in Weimar, California.
Prisoners of Hope

The death of Christ is the convincing argument that God's law doesn't change.

BY ELLEN G. WHITE

When prophets stood in defense of the truth, it was the word of God that was given to them. They understood the work of salvation to be accomplished by the Messiah to come. But after Christ came, after He died as man's sacrifice, after the typical sacrifices were fulfilled by the antitype, the old truth in the typical service was revealed more clearly. In Christ, the representative of the Father, a wonderful truth was revealed to the world. The light from the cross of Calvary, reflected back upon the Jewish age, gives character and significance to the whole Jewish economy; and on this side of the cross, in a special manner, we have the truth as it is in Jesus. Truth communicated through our Redeemer becomes indeed present truth.

What a truth is presented as we gaze upon Jesus in connection with the cross of Calvary, as we see this wonderful, this Counselor, this mysterious Victim, stooping beneath the amazing burden of our race! That the transgressor might have another trial, that men might be brought into favor with God the Father, the eternal Son of God interposed Himself to bear the punishment of transgression. One clothed with humanity, who was yet one with the Deity, was our ransom.
The very earth shook and reeled at the spectacle of God's dear Son suffering the wrath of God for man's transgression. The heavens were clothed in sackcloth to hide the sight of the Divine Sufferer.

It was the transgression of the law of God that made this suffering necessary. And yet men harbor the thought, and give expression to the suggestions of Satan through those who trample upon the law of God, that all this suffering was to make that law of none effect. Deceived and blinded by the great transgressor, they tell the people that there is no law, or that, if they keep the commandments of God in this dispensation, they have fallen from grace. What a delusion is this that Satan has fastened upon human minds!

When the theory that the law of Jehovah is not binding upon the human family is adopted and taught, man is blinded to his terrible ruin. He cannot discern it. Then God has no moral standard by which to measure character, and to govern the heavenly universe, the worlds fallen, and this fallen world. Could God have abolished the law in order to meet man in his fallen condition, and yet have maintained His honor as Governor of the universe, Christ need not have died. But the death of Christ is the convincing argument that the law of God is as unchanging as His throne. In the place of the great sacrifice's abating one jot or one tittle of the Father's law, that sacrifice exalts the law; it proclaims to worlds fallen and to the fallen race that God's law is changeless, and that He will maintain His authority and sustain His law.

Were the law understood apart from Christ, it would have a crushing power upon sinful men, blotting the sinner out of existence. But by understanding the law in connection with Christ, receiving Him by faith as his substitute and surety, man sees himself as a prisoner of hope. The truth as it is in Jesus is an acquaintance with the holy, just, and good law of God, as this law is elevated, and its immutability demonstrated, in Christ. He magnified the law, expanded its every precept, and in His obedience left man an example, that he also may meet its demands.

Then why will men be so deceived, and rush on in transgression, breaking God's law, and teaching others to do the same, rushing on the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler? Why will they make trial for themselves? Why will they test the justice of God, whether He will venture to deal out to man, unsparingly and unflinchingly, the portion that is expressly declared in the Scriptures for all transgressors of the law? The agonies of the Garden of Gethsemane, the insult, the mockery, the abuse, heaped upon God's dear Son, the horrors and ignominy of the Crucifixion, furnish sufficient and thrilling demonstration that God's justice, when it punishes, does the work thoroughly. The fact that His own Son, the surety for man, was not spared is an argument that will stand to all eternity before saint and sinner, before the universe of God, to testify that He will not excuse the transgressor of His law.

God is love. He has shown that love in the gift of His only begotten Son. Yet the love of God does not excuse sin. God did not excuse sin in Satan, in Adam, or in Cain, nor will He excuse sin in any of the children of men. The perverted nature of man may distort the love of God into an attribute of weakness; but light is shining from the cross of Calvary, that man may have correct views, and hold theories that are not perverted.

The truth as it is in Jesus will teach most important lessons. It will show that the love of God is broad and deep; that it is infinite; and that in awarding the penalty to the disobedient, those who have made void God's law, it will be uncompromising. This is the love and the justice of God combined. It reaches to the very depth of human woe and degradation, to lift up the fallen and oppressed who lay hold of the truth by repentance and faith in Jesus. And God works for the good of the universe, for the good of the rebellious sinner, by causing the sinner to suffer the penalty of his sin.

The plan of salvation is but dimly comprehended by the Christian world. Man, as now taught by men who claim to have a knowledge of the Scriptures, can never know the extent of his fallen, degraded condition; but the mission of Christ will reveal the truth as it is in Jesus. Man can know the depths to which he has sunk only by beholding the wondrous chain of redemption employed to draw him up. The extent of our ruin can be discerned only in the light of the law of God exhibited in the cross of Calvary. The wonderful plan of redemption must be discerned in the death of Christ.


At Rest

ASHLOCK, Marcella Klock—age 96; d. Nov. 9, 1997. She and her husband, J. Franklin A shlock, served in India from 1928 until 1966. She was a wife, mother, teacher, nurse, translator, administrator, writer, and counselor. She is survived by two sons, Tom and Jim; one daughter, Eva Lynn; eight grandchildren; and 19 great-grandchildren.

BALAY, Presentacion Dalusong—b. Feb. 8, 1925, Pitugo, Quezon, Philippines; d. Nov. 21, 1997, Takoma Park, Md. She served as a literature evangelist in the Philippines and three sons, Naniel, Joevel, and Emilio, Jr.; two daughters, Nilda Deseo and Juliet Cortez; two brothers, Benjamin and Nestor; three sisters, Laura Rivera, Trinidad Classiette, and Celicia Gonzales; and seven grandchildren.

CLAPP, Doris G.—age 91; d. Dec. 7, 1997, Denver, Colo. She was director of nursing at Paradise Valley Hospital, Madison College, Palatka Hospital, and Washington Adventist Hospital (the latter from 1959 to 1965, where she promoted the establishment of an intensive-care unit). She is survived by two nieces, Nancy K. English and Delight Clapp; two grandnieces; and one great-nephew.

HAMEL, Beatrice Nelson—b. June 21, 1914, Oljeto, Utah; d. Dec. 25, 1997. Before becoming a Seventh-day Adventist she served as a Presbyterian pastor and then for 18 years in the Adventist Church as an evangelistic speaker (including with the Voice of Prophecy), Bible worker, and pastor. She is survived by her husband, Paul E. Hamel; one sister, Mary L. English and Delight Clapp; two grandnieces; and one great-nephew.

HARTMAN, John I.—b. Oct. 25, 1911, A rgentina; d. Dec. 4, 1997, Berrien Springs, Mich. He was treasurer of various conferences and missions, a college, and a division. He pastored several churches and became president of the Teisco and then Iowa conferences. He is survived by his wife, Lucy; three sons, Tom, Jr., Stuart, and Daniel; three daughters, Betty Bracker, Perlinia Bevyle, and Brenda Fern Kaysto; 17 grandchildren; 24 great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandchild.

HOLRLAND, John D.—b. May 19, 1898, Battle Creek, Mich.; d. Oct. 29, 1997, Col legedale, Tenn. He served in the church for 60 years, beginning as an office secretary in the General Conference. He was a treasurer of various conferences and missions, a college, and a division. He pastored several churches and became president of the Texico and then Iowa conferences. He is survived by two daughters, Betty Hughes and Ruth Brass; one brother, Ralph; one sister, Agnes Unger; nine grandchildren; and 16 great-grandchildren.

JOHANSEN, Svein B.—b. June 12, 1930, Norway; d. Jan. 4, 1997, Denmark. He served for almost 40 years as a pastor and administrator in Iceland, West Africa, Scandinavia, and the Middle East. He is survived by his wife, Agnese; two sons, Per and Mork; one daughter, Linda Young; and two grandsons.

KLEIN, Obed E.—b. Oct. 26, 1908, Cameron, Tex. d. Oct. 23, 1997, East Islip, N.Y. During his 48 years of service he pastored churches in Michigan, North Carolina, and West Virginia. He is survived by one daughter, Norma Dagnelli; and three grandchildren.
Just Sparrows

BY LAURIE L. DE WITT

It snowed again last night. It had snowed the past three days and melted a lot before each day was over, but the ground had stayed covered for the most part.

I looked out the window and saw some sparrows. They had been scurrying the bushes and shrubs for any seeds that might have been left accidentally. Now they were under my utility trailer, scratching around for food.

We had moved from east Texas and had not been in Canada for a winter before. Snow was rare in Texas. The progression of the seasons could more easily be charted by the fluffy little balls that visited our large feeder.

The goldfinches would pass us in the fall and come back in the spring, although sometimes they wintered over. In the spring their olive-drab coats would be exchanged for bright-yellow shirts. The robins could be there anytime during the winter, but they too would usually pass us in the fall and come back in the spring. They spent more time in the spring, hopping around on the ground, looking for that juicy worm to make a bad move.

Spring had really sprung when the red-winged blackbirds and indigo and painted buntings showed up. The blackbirds were bold and flashy, while the buntings were shy little creatures, but once in a while they would come to the feeder.

Then there were the permanent residents—the wren with her shrill song that was twice as big as she was. And the mockingbird that loved to dive-bomb the cats. And the blue jays—I had a running battle with them because they liked the fruit and berries. Just one peck from each, though. They harassed the other birds, too. Then there were the mourning doves with their sound as soft and smooth as their gray coats. They would scratch around the feeder for seeds so much that the more rambunctious birds would scatter.

The hawks were year-round residents and nestled in a tall pine tree in the front yard. They never came to the feeder except to try to snatch a meal on the wing occasionally.

Our favorites were the flashy cardinals. They fed at the feeder year-round. You could be sure spring was well on its way when you saw the youngsters on the feeder, now in their gaudy adult colors, fluttering their wings and opening their beaks to be fed. And surprisingly enough, even though they were as big as their parents, mom or dad would reach down and pick up a seed and give it to the beggar.

And of course, there were the sparrows. I looked out at the snow-covered yard at the little brown sparrows. Here in Canada I hadn’t done anything to feed them. And I wondered why. And then I was afraid that I knew.

Like a flash bulletin the text came to my mind: “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows” (Luke 12:6, 7).

Why did Jesus say sparrows? Why not cardinals or buntings? Or even doves? Why a pesky little bit of nothing?

I think I know. I think He was talking about me, the chief of sinners (as Paul puts it). The person with nothing to recommend him or her to heaven.

I think He wanted us to remember that He is no respecter of persons. That He values life for life’s sake.

I think He wanted us to remember that God really cares about all of His creation.

I went out and spread some bread crumbs under the trailer and took out some warm water so that God’s tiny children could get a drink.

Soon the hungry little horde swooped down and began to eat the crumbs. And with them came a plump robin.

Yes, God still does take care of the least of us.

Thank You, Father.

Laurie L. DeWitt writes from Coaldale, Alberta, Canada.
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