A Very Young Church
Trials and Triumphs of Adventism in Mongolia

That Outfit Called the Church
Taking the Plunge

Mahem at Midday
President Paulsen
Thank you for your comprehensive coverage of the transition we have experienced in world church leadership. You have been quick to report the facts and evenhanded in reporting the situation that the church and Elder Folkenberg had to confront. We particularly enjoyed William G. Johnson’s interview with Elder Paulsen (see “‘An Open Person’—Pastor Jan Paulsen,” March 11 World Edition) and the sampling of “World Voices.”

Ed had the pleasure of briefly meeting Elder Paulsen during the summer of 1994 at Cambridge University in England. We were attending meetings of the C. S. Lewis Foundation called “Cambridge ’94—Creation and Cosmos: Chance or Dance.” It means a great deal to have as leader of our church a person of such broad interests—spiritually and intellectually. We are praying for him in his new appointment.

—Edwin and Marilyn Karlow
Riverside, California

President Jan Paulsen may have been thinking as an administrator when he identified the greatest issue facing the church as “its internationality.” Far greater issues facing our church, I suggest, are the instability of the Seventh-day Adventist nuclear family and an attendant high divorce rate, high percentages of young people abandoning the church, and the decline of personal Bible study.

—Steve Riehle
Santa Maria, California

As a member of the Trans-European Division, where Jan Paulsen was president before 1995, I am very proud of his election.

Just a question: In communication from the General Conference and in the Review, it is stated that Paulsen is the first European president. But during the 1888 General Conference session we elected O le A ndres O lsen, who was born in Skogen, Norway, and served nine years (1888-1897). When he was elected president, he was in Scandinavia supervising the work there.

—Richard Elofer, President
Israel Field

O. A. Olsen came to America at age 5. He grew up, spent most of his life, and died in America.

—Editors

Transcribing the Gospel
I wish we had had the insight to name our fourth child Matthew Mark-Luke Johnson, as did David and Gail (see Give & Take, March 11).

The most rewarding summer I ever spent was in Miami, Florida, where I copied the four Gospels (longhand) in Spanish, looking up each word I did not understand. I had already copied the Old Testament in an effort to learn the language. I spent an hour a day transcribing La Santa Biblia, and it took two and a half years to do both the Old and New Testaments. I can heartily recommend this method of obtaining a reading knowledge of a new language because the pace at which one progresses allows the message to sink in.

—Eleanor S. Johnson
College Place, Washington

I enjoyed reading about Matthew Mark-Luke Johnson very much. Please keep the Give & Take page going. It’s my favorite page, next to Letters to the Editor.

—Ted R. Chadwick
Gaston, Oregon

Practical Faith
Regarding Calvin Rock’s comment that, during the time of trouble, “perhaps there are some hideouts so remote and so secure that they will provide safety for those who plan ahead” (see Faith Alive! March 11), Probably no such safety will be available.

Ellen White agrees more closely with the latter part of Rock’s response when she says: “It is contrary to the Bible to make any provision for our temporal wants in the time of trouble” (Last Day Events, p. 264). She then describes the sad end of any food or real estate owned by God’s people at that time, and it’s safe to assume that generators and similar paraphernalia will meet the same fate. A remote location for these items doesn’t seem to make any difference.

—Bill Ludwig
Auburn, Washington
Jesus Not European

The Adventist Review has, in sketch after sketch and portrait after portrait, depicted Jesus as European. The Bible record indicates that He was born in Palestine, reared partly in Palestine (Asia) and partly in Egypt (Africa). A search of His family tree, as recorded in Matthew and Luke, does not reveal anyone from Europe. Furthermore, His ancestry is very interesting in that it includes incest, harlotry, and foreigners.

Recently you printed an apology for depicting Ruth, an ancestor of Jesus, as European. When is the same going to be done for Jesus?

—Linbrook Barker
Riverside, California

Jesus was a Jew. We try to find artwork that portrays Him as a Middle Easterner.—Editors.

Satellite Program

Congratulations! Your Battle Creek weekend program (“Faith Stories That Connect,” uplinked March 27) was tremendous! Even though I could not be there in person, I was blessed by being able to see the downlink “live” on 3ABN. I was overjoyed to be “transported” to Battle Creek and to be able to enjoy the entire program from my home. It was very well done, and I did enjoy the segment with Mark Finley immensely.

And thank you for mentioning Adventist Heritage Ministry. Heritage evangelism is a viable means of nurture and outreach ministry. This is true at each of our historic Adventist sites, but especially so at Battle Creek because of the potential for hundreds of thousands of visitors. The preservation and promotion of our unique Adventist heritage uplifts God to volunteers and to tourists alike and has already resulted in changed lives.

—Alice R. Voorheis
Adventist Heritage Ministry
Silver Spring, Maryland

Clarifying the Language

“Learning the Language” (Feb. 18) is a good idea—and a good start in helping new Adventists know the “lingo” and cautioning old Adventists about the terms we use. Two suggestions to consider in future lists:

1. Please put the explanations in simple language. I have pastor several districts. Yes, they have been close to or in the boondocks. But words such as “quinquennial” and “administrative subsection of the denomination” and “triennial” can be simplified. With greater simplicity people will have a greater understanding, and your words will have more punch.

2. Clarify “celebration churches.”

This may be my “own thing,” but in my understanding a “celebration” church is one in which modern music from our culture is used in worship and their foundational theology is contrary to the basic Adventist message. Their theology includes the following unmentioned tenets:

a. The Sabbath is downplayed.

b. Ellen White is questioned.

c. The pastors teach that victory over sin is impossible.

d. The only judgment for Christians is that at the cross.

e. They do away with the investigative judgment—it supposedly nullifies grace.

f. Their message is the message of salvation and celebrating. The three angels’ messages are an embarrassing denominational heritage.

g. The pastors teach and model a purely congregational understanding of the “church.”

On the other hand, a local church that modifies worship to include more members, includes a wider range of music, worships God, praises Jesus, upholds the Scriptures, and preaches the three angels’ messages wouldn’t, in my opinion, be a “celebration” church. These stay in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

—Dave Miller, pastor
New Windsor, Maryland
The day started bright and clear as some 2,000 teenagers and their teachers got up, dressed, and set out for another day at school. How many in that suburb of Denver, Colorado, bothered to recall that this day, April 20, was Adolf Hitler's birthday?

Two did.

While the rest of Columbine High School settled in for classes, two students had other things on their minds. They assembled an arsenal of homebuilt pipe bombs, guns, and ammunition, put on black trenchcoats and masks, and drove to the school’s parking lot.

Shortly after 11:00 a.m. they stalked into the school firing guns and detonating explosives. Laughing and giggling, they pointed, fired, and killed at point-blank range.

School, which should be a place of safety, turned into a killing field. When the carnage stopped, 12 students and a beloved teacher lay dead. At last the killers apparently turned their weapons on themselves, making a toll of 15, with another 24 injured, some critically.

The tragedy sent shock waves across the United States and around the world. Over and over people voiced the fear: If it can happen in Littleton, it can happen anywhere.

A terrible disease has broken out among us. It respects not social status, intelligence, or geography. Young people and kids—from average middle-class homes attending average schools—are getting weapons and turning them on their peers.

Up to now, the current school year had seemed relatively quiet. The previous one had been horrible, with 42 people murdered in the nation’s schoolyards, including:

- Five killed and 10 wounded by two children in Arkansas;
- Three killed and five wounded by a teen in Kentucky;
- Two killed and 20 wounded by a student in Oregon.

All these ghastly incidents pale in comparison with the mayhem at Littleton. Two seniors carefully planned a mission of madness and murder, cutting down their fellows at the high noon of life.

How could this tragedy possibly have happened?

How could it not have happened?

Society is sick. The images that invade us all through television, movies, and the Internet, and the songs that fill the airwaves and sell on CDs, are sick. Violence, mayhem, killing, racism, satanism, preoccupation with death—these are the sights and sounds of life in these times.

What do we expect—that adults and children and high school students won’t be affected if they expose themselves to this garbage? Don’t we believe the biblical principle that by beholding we become changed, either into the image of Christ or the likeness of the devil? (2 Cor. 3:18; Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 355). Why be surprised when some kids who see and hear this stuff go over the edge?

The mayhem at Columbine could be a wake-up call for the United States. It must be a wake-up call for Seventh-day Adventists.

The next school could be the one where your kids study or where you teach.

The next kids with loaded guns could be yours.

I say it’s time to get real. Fellow believers, let’s quit playing games of religion and realize that we’re in a war. Time is running out; the forces of evil are intensifying. Society, for all its religious veneer, is being taken over by a new paganism.

This is just what Jesus said would happen before He returns. “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars,” He said. “On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive for what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken” (Luke 21:25, 26, NIV).

And this word from Ellen White: “We are living in the time of the end. The fast-fulfilling signs of the times declare that the coming of Christ is near at hand. The days in which we live are solemn and important. The Spirit of God is gradually but surely being withdrawn from the earth (Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 11).

In this time of the end, Jesus alone is our security. Let’s focus on Him, and encourage our dear ones to give Him first place in their hearts and their time. He is our salvation, now and forevermore.
Prayer is the answer to every problem in life. It puts us in tune with divine wisdom, which knows how to adjust everything perfectly. So often we do not pray in certain situations, because, from our standpoint, the outlook is hopeless. But nothing is impossible with God. Nothing is so entangled that it cannot be made right by the loving Spirit of God. Nothing is so serious that it cannot be remedied. Nothing is so strained for God to bring about reconciliation and understanding. Nothing is so deep rooted that it cannot be overcome. No one is so weak that he cannot be made strong. No one is so ill that he cannot be healed. No one is so dull that it cannot be made brilliant. Whatever we need or desire, if we trust God, He will supply it. If anything is causing worry and anxiety, let us stop rehearsing the difficulty and trust God for healing, love, and power.

I can’t remember now when I first got hold of the above statement. I only know I’ve used it zillions of times in talks and sermons over the years, giving the credit to Ellen G. White, and citing the reference neatly printed at the bottom of my copy: Review and Herald, October 7, 1865.

But one day, curious about the context, I went searching for the original quote in the reference indicated. It was not there. In fact, there wasn’t even an issue of the Review with that date. And when I contacted the Ellen G. White Estate in Washington, they blew even more wind out of my sail. Mrs. White never said it, they told me. But the statement was too good to set aside. I continued using it, only now making sure to emphasize its uncertain origin.

Over the years since then, I’ve found myself sitting at the feet of numerous speakers using the same quotation and citing the same reference. One such instance was the General Conference morning worship, March 18, 1991. As we walked away together—quite by accident—following the service, Ellen G. White Estate associate secretary Roger Coon and I shared our appreciation for the worship just ended, but chuckled together at the almost universal misunderstanding of the source of the quotation in question. “But if Mrs. White didn’t write it,” I said to him as we parted, “she should have. It is so good!”

Later that day Coon graciously shared with me a copy of the letter he’d sent to the worship leader for that morning. In it he’d written the following: “The little handout ‘Prayer is the Answer’ had an incorrect publication date. ‘The preparer missed it by exactly 100 years—it was [published] O ct. 7, 1965. I recognized it immediately, since many people think Ellen White was the author—and an 1865 date lends credence to this misconception.’ Coon went on to point out that “in 1865 . . . [the Review] was published O ct. 3 and 10” (not October 7).

So where did the statement come from? It would seem that it entered the Adventist repertoire through the Review and Herald of October 7, 1965, quoted in an article by R. A. Rentfro, entitled “My Last Day on Earth.” Unfortunately, Rentfro did not give his source, saying only that “someone has said . . .”

Since receiving Coon’s letter that day back in 1991, I’ve been meaning to write this editorial to help set the record straight for a larger audience. Though the importance of doing this would be more readily apparent if the statement were problematic, there’s always wisdom in accuracy. It’s much better to correct the record now than in the midst of some unexpected embarrassment later. Who knows what problems might surface down the road? I have to admit, for example, that each time I used the statement, I did feel just a tad nervous about the claim that “no mind is so dull that it cannot be made brilliant.” A nd it wasn’t that I ever doubted the power of God. Rather it was that I tried to imagine what would happen if people got the idea that every person born with congenital brain damage could be prayed into brilliance in a world in which even those with normal faculties often have to settle for the ordinary.

Do I still use the statement? You bet! But how I would love to give the correct credit! Does anyone out there know who first said it? Might it lose some of its punch if we knew? What do you think?
WHAT MY MOM MEANS TO ME

You want to know what my mom means to me? Well, she is very special. I’m surprised she isn’t Mrs. America—she’s so pretty! My mom cooks the best food. She cooks a whole bunch of rice and other good foods. I’m surprised she doesn’t have a Spanish restaurant—she’s so good! And when I’m sick, she takes care of me so well—I get better in a second. And I love her hugs. As you see, my beautiful mother means a lot to me.

—Justin DeMutiis, Spring Hill, Florida

ADVENTIST LIFE

When my daughter Pam was 3, we were taking a walk when we came upon a stack of beekeeper’s boxes. “Mommy,” said Pam, “what’s in these boxes?”

I explained how the bees collect honey and bring it to the hives or boxes to store it.

“Oh,” she said with amazement, “I bet that looks so cute with all those tiny little jars of honey on the shelf.”

—Irene Nagy, Coeur d’A lene, Idaho

One evening my husband was reluctantly helping me cut out felts for my cradle roll Sabbath school when our bachelor friend dropped by. He told us about his recent date and his criteria for the perfect wife.

My husband glanced up from trimming the felts and quipped, “Just make sure she has all her felts already cut out!”

—Cheryl Elmendorf, Loma Linda, California

ADVENTIST QUOTES

“We can’t bring everyone to Jesus, but we can bring Jesus to everyone.”

—Sunday Villarica, Adventist Frontier Missions teacher for the Palawano project school

“People used the cross to try to do away with the Lord of the Sabbath. Now people use the cross to try to do away with the Sabbath of the Lord.”

—Harry White, at the Chilliwack, British Columbia, church

“John [the Baptist] didn’t care about his head because Jesus had his heart.”

—Dennis Clark, at the Perth, New Brunswick, church

LEGALLY SPEAKING

NEED A LAWYER? The first meeting of the Adventist Lawyers Association was held the weekend of February 6 in Lusaka, Zambia. The topic? Integrating the practice of law and the practice of Adventism.

CONTRIBUTE TO GIVE & TAKE

We can especially use submissions to these categories: Adventist Quotes, Readers’ Exchange, Jots & Tittles, and Dream Center. And we can always use top-quality photos/captions, tasteful drawings and cartoons, brief poems, and other fast-paced items. Send submissions (which won’t be acknowledged or returned) to Give & Take, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904; fax: 301-680-6638; e-mail: 74617.15@compuserve.com.
A Very Young Church

Updating Adventist mission work in Mongolia

BY BILL KNOTT AND DALE TUNNELL

In May 1998 the Adventist Review reported on the pioneering mission work of Brad and Cathie Jolly in Mongolia. Adventist presence in Mongolia was restarted in 1991 by Adventist Frontier Missions and this brave young couple after an interval of more than 60 years. At great personal cost Brad and Cathie began teaching and preaching, gathering a small group of believers in this mostly Buddhist nation. In 1992 they were joined by Joanne Park, a student missionary, who returned to work with them in Mongolia after completing her education in the United States. In October 1993 the first Mongolian convert was baptized by then General Conference president Robert Folkenberg.

Four months after the May 1998 article appeared in print, Brad Jolly succumbed to cancer after more than two years of struggle. In April 1998, the Tunnell family—Dale, Cheryl, Jessica, and Ashley—moved to Mongolia to coordinate the church’s efforts in the country. Dale, an experienced youth pastor most recently serving at Georgia-Cumberland Academy, frequently updates colleagues and friends in North America through e-mail (tunnell@magicnet.mn) on the trials and triumphs of the young church in Mongolia. Here he answers e-mail questions from Adventist Review associate editor Bill Knott, an old friend.

Knott: Dale, as you and your family were getting ready to leave for Mongolia, I remember that you predicted you would have to be very flexible in order to make it there. Have the contrasts with life in the United States been as dramatic as you expected?

Tunnell: This is a country of change and extreme differ-
ences. The weather is just one example of that: we go from severe cold in the winter (−40°F) to 90°F in the summer (maybe only a day or two of that). The land itself transitions from the awesome Gobi Desert in the south to beautiful lush mountains in the northwest. We have those same differences in people, too. The economic disparity is amazing: some people are very wealthy, owning cars, houses, etc. Others dig through trash to find food and live on the streets.

You were told to expect that most of your ministry would be with young people. Has that proved to be the case?

While Mongolia was still a Communist nation and in the orbit of the Soviet Union, the Soviets noticed that the population in Mongolia was actually declining. They tried to reverse this trend by giving awards. If a woman had six children, she could be a “bronze medalist” mom; with seven, a “silver medalist.” Eight children earned you the distinction of being a “gold medalist” mom. I’m not sure having eight children is worth such recognition, but that wasn’t the only incentive supplied for having children. If a working woman became pregnant and had a child, her employer and the state gave her a two-year medical leave— with pay. This approach is still in place today, except that the employer now covers all costs. This usually leads to a lump sum “buyout” instead of a continual salary drain. Quite naturally, this policy has provided Mongolia with a very young population. More than 50 percent of the population is under age 22, and more than 75 percent of our church is younger than 22.

We’re challenged by the fact that these youth and young adults find it hard to share the gospel with older people. The culture almost forbids such sharing because of the respect given to seniors. Our young adults are very apprehensive to have older people in their classes. Those who have traveled abroad aren’t afraid of this, and we are working on showing the others that they truly have something to share.

I’m guessing that life in a country trying to transition from socialism to capitalism can be a bit nerve-racking.

The economy here is changing daily. The value of the U.S. dollar to the Mongolian tugrik changes quickly, and prices for goods change rapidly as well. Salaries, however, remain the same. Most employees make less than a U.S. equivalent of $100 a month, and yet many goods cost more than in North America. Oranges are about $1.50 a pound; tomatoes, about the same. Whole-wheat flour is nearly $6.00 for a five-pound bag. Broccoli is about $1.75 per pound. This doesn’t make for a very healthy nation. The main foods eaten here are meat, dairy products, bread, and ice cream (I’ve discovered that this is a whole new food group!).

How do people cope with that kind of economic stress?

I learned something new a couple of months ago. Mongolia is second only to France when it comes to producing alcohol, but Mongolia doesn’t export any of its product. There’s a whole lot of
drinking going on in this country. It’s sad to see people lying on the sidewalk, even in freezing weather, sleeping off the alcohol. If you’re a man and don’t drink, people wonder about you. There’s a lot of pressure on our young men to participate in drinking activities.

When I saw you last a year ago, you and your family were just finishing 10 weeks of language study. Your language teacher laughingly told you, “Make sure you don’t go anywhere without Cheryl,” since she seemed to be learning Mongolian more rapidly. How has it gone?

We understand enough to exchange greetings, get around in taxis, buy things, and simple conversation, but deep, meaningful conversation must take place through a translator, and then something is lost. (If you want something specific to pray for, pray that we learn the language—faster. This has been very challenging at times.) Have you and your family had to make a lot of adjustments?

Getting necessary items can be quite a trick. One day you may see things you want; next week they don’t have it any longer. There’s no such thing as a Wal-Mart (we keep praying someone will catch the vision and open one here in Ulaan Bataar). There are little markets all over the place, and what they call “toots” that have a variety of items. It’s like going to a flea market all the time.

Weather was a Major concern when we arrived here. Cheryl hates to be cold, and we’ve never lived anywhere this cold. (I guess we got used to Georgia!) Fortunately, our fifth-floor apartment is very heated—central heating that’s government-controlled. It comes on in September and off in May. You can change the setting—just open the windows or undress! So we have “inside” clothes and “outside” clothes. We wear our Georgia summer clothes inside and “Siberian” winter wear when we’re out. It’s really not bad. God answered our prayers in this regard.

I guess I miss driving the most. Ever since going to college, I’ve had my own car, and I just like to drive. Here I have no car. We mostly take buses and trolleys. These are pretty good, but have no real schedule. They just come every five to 15 minutes. Riding the bus takes extra time because of all the stops, and often you have to take two or three buses to get where you need to go. This has taken some getting used to, and I’m not sure I’m there yet.

Ministering in Mongolia must be very different than pastoring in the United States. What are the most striking differences?

I really miss the fellowship of other pastors. When the Georgia-Cumberland Conference held their ministers’ meeting in January, I really felt homesick. I even called to check on them. Pastors of the other denominations here are pretty exclusive. We’ve had some missionary families from other denominations over for supper once in a while, and it would be easy to do so more often. But two things have made me hesitate: 1) They relate to things from a totally different perspective (which isn’t all bad); 2) More importantly, I could get comfortable serving these people and lose focus on the Mongolian mission.

Your family arrived in Mongolia just a few months before Brad Jolly died of cancer back in the U.S.
What impact did that news have on his friends there?  The Mongolian members took the news of Brad’s death very hard. Many of them have a hard time understanding how a person who devoted his life to serving God, under very harsh conditions, could be allowed to die. We’ve lost some church attenders over this issue. I’ve given more than a half dozen Bible studies on the topic of why bad things happen to good people, and even preached a sermon on it. They still have questions, but there comes a time when they must walk by faith and hope in the promises of God’s word.

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Brad’s death wasn’t the only chal-
challenge to the church here. When Joanne (Park) Kim returned to the U.S., there was a real leadership vacuum and a struggle over what was going to happen next. These are young Christians struggling with some difficult issues. We desperately need your prayers.

We've read news stories here in North America about attempts to get the Adventist Church in Mongolia officially registered with the government. How is the government relating to your work?

The government basically sees Christianity as an intrusion into the Mongolian lifestyle and culture, but officials are eager for money to help with various government programs. They want our help (translated money) to hold various seminars for anti-drinking/smoking campaigns, even while government officials themselves are drinking and smoking.

Each year, every church must register. This usually turns into having churches “contribute” to various activities. It can be very frustrating working with a government that looks down on Christianity. Some officials see us Christians as foolish because we’re so easily separated from our resources.

What kind of resources do you have to go about your ministry?

The basic challenges here are much the same as in North America—too little money, too little time, too much stress. The additional challenges include the language barrier and not having adequate translated resources on hand. We don’t even have the whole Bible translated into Mongolian, or any of Ellen White’s books translated. This makes it very difficult at times. We have a few storybooks talking about people that found Christianity and the Sabbath. There is a great need to get things translated. That requires money, a resource that Mongolia has very little of.

From the little bits of news I’ve heard, it sounds like the church is growing rapidly.

Currently on any given Sabbath there are more than 70 people attending services. There are 35 baptized members, and another class is preparing for baptism. Church services are planned and prepared by the Mongolians, and usually conducted by a young man named Bold. Bold has been a pastor in training for three years. Just now, he’s in the United States, attending health training classes at Pacific Health Education Center. While he’s gone, pastoral duties have fallen on two Mongolians who have had pastoral training in the Philippines.

You were hoping to start home-based Bible study groups in Ulaan Batar. Have you been able to accomplish that goal?

We have 13 home groups functioning now, with an average attendance of 130. These home groups range in size from 20 persons to as few as five, and the ages of those attending extend from 7 year olds (our home group for children) to 60+. Currently our congregation has no members older than 29, and most of them are 18 to 22 year olds.

This is a young church in every sense. We are young people and our church has been organized just over one year. Most members don’t have jobs (because of their age) and many aren’t able to attend school (because of a lack of money). But they’re excited about sharing Jesus Christ. Some of them are even wanting sponsorship to go to other cities this summer to share the gospel!

I heard that the congregation was able to purchase a building in January. What will that mean to your work?

Having our own place to meet for worship and fellowship will be a tremendous blessing. It will mean that we don’t have to fear being evicted or asked to move, that we don’t have to carry the keyboard, guitar, songbooks, offering plates, or children’s Sabbath school materials every week. It will also mean that there will be a sign on the building declaring that this is a church, which is a big witness to the community. When visitors miss a week or two, they’ll still know where to find us, because we have a permanent location.

The building is a three-story building with a full basement. In the immediate future it will be used for church meetings, church offices, ADRA offices, and some missionary housing. We hope to begin a language school and hold various seminars in the near future.

Having our own building also means many headaches. Now we’re responsible when the plumbing doesn’t work or new electric lines have to be run. We’re also responsible for getting new phone lines put in (keep praying about this one!) and for security and maintenance problems. I’m praying that the blessings will outweigh the problems!

How can Adventists around the world support this mission in Mongolia?

The short answer is—pray, pray, pray. It’s fascinating to see what the Holy Spirit can do and is doing here. Sometimes I feel like all I do is just stand back and watch while the Holy Spirit does the work.

As I mentioned before, we’re also in desperate need of money to help with translation projects for the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. The headway we can make in having a positive impact on this culture will be limited until we can provide spiritual materials in Mongolian.

For those whom the Lord is impressing, spending a year as missionaries with us would be GREAT. Other Adventist laypersons could investigate starting businesses here and amplify the church’s presence as tentmaker missionaries. It was the call of God that caused our family to leave a fairly comfortable life in the U.S. to come here. I’m sure there are other believers whom God is impressing with the needs and the opportunities in Mongolia.

Bill Knott is associate editor of the Adventist Review. Dale Tunnell is the senior pastor of the Ulaan Batar congregation and director of Adventist missions in Mongolia.

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Currently on any given Sabbath there are more than 70 people attending services. There are 35 baptized members, and another class is preparing for baptism. Church services are planned and prepared by the Mongolians, and usually conducted by a young man named Bold. Bold has been a pastor in training for three years. Just now, he’s in the United States, attending health training classes at Pacific Health Education Center. While he’s gone, pastoral duties have fallen on two Mongolians who have had pastoral training in the Philippines.

You were hoping to start home-based Bible study groups in Ulaan Batar. Have you been able to accomplish that goal?

We have 13 home groups functioning now, with an average attendance of 130. These home groups range in size from 20 persons to as few as five, and the ages of those attending extend from 7 year olds (our home group for children) to 60+. Currently our congregation has no members older than 29, and most of them are 18 to 22 year olds.

This is a young church in every sense. We are young people and our church has been organized just over one year. Most members don’t have jobs (because of their age) and many aren’t able to attend school (because of a lack of money). But they’re excited about sharing Jesus Christ. Some of them are even wanting sponsorship to go to other cities this summer to share the gospel!

I heard that the congregation was able to purchase a building in January. What will that mean to your work?

Having our own place to meet for worship and fellowship will be a tremendous blessing. It will mean that we don’t have to fear being evicted or asked to move, that we don’t have to carry the keyboard, guitar, songbooks, offering plates, or children’s Sabbath school materials every week. It will also mean that there will be a sign on the building declaring that this is a church, which is a big witness to the community. When visitors miss a week or two, they’ll still know where to find us, because we have a permanent location.

The building is a three-story building with a full basement. In the immediate future it will be used for church meetings, church offices, ADRA offices, and some missionary housing. We hope to begin a language school and hold various seminars in the near future.

Having our own building also means many headaches. Now we’re responsible when the plumbing doesn’t work or new electric lines have to be run. We’re also responsible for getting new phone lines put in (keep praying about this one!) and for security and maintenance problems. I’m praying that the blessings will outweigh the problems!

How can Adventists around the world support this mission in Mongolia?

The short answer is—pray, pray, pray. It’s fascinating to see what the Holy Spirit can do and is doing here. Sometimes I feel like all I do is just stand back and watch while the Holy Spirit does the work.

As I mentioned before, we’re also in desperate need of money to help with translation projects for the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. The headway we can make in having a positive impact on this culture will be limited until we can provide spiritual materials in Mongolian.

For those whom the Lord is impressing, spending a year as missionaries with us would be GREAT. Other Adventist laypersons could investigate starting businesses here and amplify the church’s presence as tentmaker missionaries. It was the call of God that caused our family to leave a fairly comfortable life in the U.S. to come here. I’m sure there are other believers whom God is impressing with the needs and the opportunities in Mongolia.

Bill Knott is associate editor of the Adventist Review. Dale Tunnell is the senior pastor of the Ulaan Batar congregation and director of Adventist missions in Mongolia.

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found the law concerning the rebellious son (Deut. 21:18-21) to be too severe. Could you comment on it?

The interpretation of legal materials requires careful analysis of the specific law itself and its true intent. Laws serve to protect the rights and privileges of individuals as they interact with each other. So it's important not only to try to ascertain the particular purpose of legislation but also to determine the social background that made it relevant for Israelite society.

We also need to mention a couple principles that will guide us in understanding God's actions. First, we must recognize that in God's dialogue with humans He condescends to our level in order to take us to His own level at a pace we can follow.

Second, we must keep in mind that the theocratic form of government of the Old Testament is no longer operative among God's people. He, as king of the universe, will deal with the violators of His law in His own time.

Now, back to the specific law of the rebellious son. An analysis of this legislation reveals its purpose, background, and function.

1. It builds on the fifth commandment. The command to honor one's parents does not specify the penalty to be inflicted on its violators. It is phrased in a positive way and promises a long life to those who obey it (Ex. 20:12). The command and the legislation under consideration have the purpose of preserving social order by promoting and requiring respect for authority. It legislates what ought to take place at home, where such respect was instilled in young members of society.

2. It recognizes the rights of those affected by it. The law of the rebellious son recognizes the privileges and responsibilities of the members of the family as they confront a serious legal crisis.

The rights of the parents are protected. They are responsible for the upbringing and disciplining of their children, as they teach and train them. But parents also have the right to seek the assistance of the community if a child develops a pattern of rebellion and disrespect.

The rights of the children are protected. Parents were not to do as they pleased with a child who had no respect for them. This was an extremely important legal protection in a world where children were considered to be only a piece of property. A child's life was in the hands of the courts of law and not in that of their parents who, out of frustration and rage, could be tempted to kill them.

The rights of the mother were protected. The decision to prosecute a child was not exclusively in the hands of the father. It appears that, at least in some cases, the father thought he had authority over the life of his children (cf. Gen. 42:37). But this law eliminates that power by requiring the mother to participate in the decision to prosecute any of her children and by placing the final decision in the court of law. The legislation seems to have been a significant improvement over existing practices.

Justice is sought. The parents were expected to present evidence showing that the behavior of the child was not an isolated incident but a true pattern of criminal behavior. The legislation is dealing not with an immature child, but with a person who is able to distinguish between good and evil, who has become a juvenile delinquent, a threat to society. The elders of the city, functioning as judges, would analyze the evidence and make a decision. If the decision was to apply capital punishment, the men of the town would execute the sentence. The parents were not involved in the punishment.

Since the consequences of this law were so serious, it served as a deterrent for juvenile delinquency and for parents taking their children to court on superficial charges motivated by anger or any other emotional reaction. The law illustrates how important family life is in God's eyes, and underlines the serious responsibility of parents and the community of believers in rearing children.

Angel Manuel Rodríguez is an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference.
That Outfit Called the

Why I believe it will never go down.

BY LESLIE N. POLLARD

I TESTIFY TO MY BRETHREN AND SISTERS that the church of Christ, enfeebled and defective as it may be, is the only object on earth on which He bestows His supreme regard.1

I rise this morning to stand for the church. Though the church of Christ has felt the white-hot criticisms of the agnostic, the unbeliever, and the infidel, the Bible assures us that God’s church will fulfill its mission in spectacular fashion. In its march through history, the church will not suffer defeat. It will not be destroyed. It will not be dissuaded. It will not be detoured. When we as administrators and leaders in God’s service are tempted to wonder if the church will come apart at the seams, the timeless word of the Lord roars with deafening finality: “Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). The triumph of the church is guaranteed by its Founder.

Will the church of God face challenges? Definitely. Will we meet hurdles as we take our last laps around history’s decaying stadium? Positively. Will there be Red Seas and swelling Jordans of difficulty to cross? Absolutely! But at the end of time, when history has gasped its last breath, when the last syllable is uttered, and when the weary calendars of time collapse exhausted at the feet of eternity, God’s church—that group of faithful followers of the Lamb from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people—will stand. John saw them standing on Mount Zion with the Lamb (Rev. 14:1).

When I was a child back in my hometown of New Orleans, we used to play King of the Mountain. In this game we would find a hill and climb it. Then we would wrestle and tug and pull and grab each other until there was only one person left standing on the mountain. The one left standing was then proclaimed king of the mountain.

In the wrestling match of the church’s history, skeptics have tugged at the church, unbelievers have pulled at the church, and false members have grabbed at the church through their insidious and artful betrayals. But guess who will stand at the end of time? The church. The gates of hell will not prevail against God’s true church. This conviction ignites the church’s mission. The gates of hell will not prevail, because the One who called us can never fail.

But Let’s Beware of Overconfidence

We must not allow Christ’s strong word, however, to give us an unconditional confidence. The church does not stand today because of any inherent strength in its lower extremities. It does not stand today because of its published houses, educational institutions, hospitals, or media ministries. The church stands today because its Founder stood strong at Calvary and stands today in the heavenly sanctuary. Our strength is not a bottom-up strength. It is a top-down strength. Our strength comes from the Lord Jesus.

Notice in Revelation 5:6 that the Lamb appears as if it had been slain. Many exegetes have done wonderful work on this apocalyptic passage. They have pointed out how the Lamb had seven eyes and seven horns, signifying wisdom...
and power. The most important part of the image is rarely noted, however. Despite the horrific events experienced at Calvary—where the Son of God was insulted, ridiculed, and crucified—the bloodied, bruised, and beaten Lamb is still standing!

The church stands only because the Lamb is still standing. It was this Lamb who planted and founded the church. He gathered a motley band of 12 disciples, authorized them to continue His mission in His absence, and drew them together in a rented upper room. He rained down the living fires of the Holy Spirit upon them, implanted gifts of grace in them, and sent them out into the world to convert it. He founded the church, baptized it with the gasoline of grace, and, at Pentecost, He put a match to it. It was Christ who founded the church and gifted it for success.

The church is not a synthetic institution, cut out with human hands and woven in the loom of human opinion. The church is the divine dream of a covenant community that began in Eden, continued with the call of Abraham, and was amplified with the establishment of Israel. It continued in the life and ministry of Jesus, exploded in the work of the apostolic church, and continued as a faithful witness in the Middle Ages.

Jesus founded the church, but He never finished it. That has been entrusted to His final remnant who today are going everywhere saying, “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come” (Rev. 14:7). In this final gathering call, God forms and organizes a remnant of believers around Jesus’ last-day message. When we take this positive view of the church, we are not burying our heads in the sand. We are not overlooking the failings of the church.

Not Infallible

Does the church have weaknesses? Yes. As early as 1856 we recognized that the message to the church at Laodicea applied to us. During the years of 1856 and 1857, 348 items appeared in the Review on the Laodicean message. Without exception the Laodicean message was applied to Sabbathkeeping Adventists. We claim no institutional infallibility. We have not always listened to the voice of God. We ridiculed and banished the prophet to Australia in 1891. We challenged the Lordship of Christ. Very early in the adolescence of our history, certain leaders of the remnant church struggled with Christ's Lordship. In Battle Creek in 1895, leaders assumed “kingly power.” Not committing to the Lordship of Christ, they set themselves up to control everything and everyone in the church. Ellen G. White wrote, “The high-handed power that has been developed, as though position has made men gods, makes me afraid.”

God’s answer to the centralization of power and lordly exercise of leadership was the reorganization of the church in 1901, which effectively decentralized the authority of the church.

These documented weaknesses do not derail God’s intention for the church. The church is central to God’s final plan. In the 1960s a young radical marched on the sidewalk in front of a church building with a placard that read “Jesus? Yes! The church? No!” He was wrong: he did not understand. It is not Jesus or the church. It is Jesus and the church. To separate Christ from the church is to separate the Head from the body. Listen: “For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to rec-
Kurios, analysis of the word “Lord,” or is Lord of the church. Peter reminds began with the exaltation of Christ.

Let there be no confusion. Christ is Lord of the church. Peter reminds us, “God made him Lord.” An analysis of the word “Lord,” or Kurios, is fascinating. It is used of an owner in Luke 19:33. The Greek kuriake means “belonging to the Lord.” It implies that the one called Lord has full use of the thing owned. Christ is called the Kurios of the Sabbath in Mark 2:27, 28. In other words, Christ could use the Sabbath to minister to human need because He created and owned it in the first place. And when Thomas, stricken with fear and doubt, probes his finger into the wounds of the risen Christ, he cries out, “My Lord [Kurios] and my God” (John 20:28). In other words, “I surrender. I’m ready to be used now, Lord. I’m available. Use me as an instrument of Your peace.” And when the body of God’s leaders gathers in a little place called Foz do Iguaçu and begins its deliberations with the proclamation that “Christ is Lord,” we are saying “We are available, Lord. Use us to bless Your people—Your people who sit in our pews and donate their time, talent, and treasure to the church.”

Beyond Tolerance, Beyond Acceptance

To say Christ is Lord is to also say that God has a plan for the church. That plan includes the reconciling of people everywhere in Jesus. “This mystery is that through the gospel the entities are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise of Christ Jesus” (Eph. 3:6, NIV). “For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility” (Eph. 2:14, NIV). Unity comes first from reconciliation.

A couple years ago I attended a number of very helpful diversity conferences. A teacher from the world prepares for the twenty-first century, diversity has become a critical concern in North America—in industry, education, and business. It means that we intentionally include difference in our circle of association and decision-making. Diversity is concerned with how people groups relate to each other. It is interesting that at the big secular conferences, the goal of their diversity training is tolerance for difference. By stretching we get to acceptance. After that the highly paid diversity gurus do not know where to go. But we in the remnant church know we need to go beyond tolerance and beyond acceptance.

Next year Prudence and I will celebrate our twenty-first anniversary. Suppose I take her out to a candlelight dinner and with soft romantic music playing, I look at her and say, “Dear, with each passing year I am tolerating you more and more.”

Our word for managing diversity in the remnant church is not tolerance. It is love. “Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren” (1 Peter 3:8). Love is the foundation for unity, and we will never be united as a church if we do not love each other.

I don’t know about you, but I enjoy being a part of God’s great church. His worldwide family. A s a 14-year-old, I remember belonging to my mother’s street-corner preaching band. Mother was one of the faithful old-time adventist members. She and about seven or eight of her friends would go down to Canal Street in New Orleans, plop down a wooden crate, and preach about the Second Coming. She made sure I accompanied the group. Those older adults and this one child gave out what was back then called “truth-filled literature.” They were not ashamed. We should not be ashamed.

I am not ashamed of a health message that could add six to seven years to my life.

I am not ashamed of a Saviour who now intercedes in the heavenly sanctuary for His people.

I am not ashamed of a church that teaches we ought to keep God’s Sabbath and reverence God’s law.

I am not ashamed of a church that advocates that Christian education is a part of the rehabilitative arm of the gospel of salvation.

I am not ashamed of a church that teaches that character counts.

I am not ashamed of a church that tells us that death is not some disembodied state of ephemeral bliss.

I am not ashamed of a church that teaches us to be faithful to our wives and husbands, to love our children, and to lead them in the Lord.

I am not ashamed of a church that says “Christ is coming again.”

A rabbi, teaching his students, asked: “Where does God dwell?”

The students thought for a moment and said, “God dwells everywhere.”

The rabbi paused and said, “Not so. God dwells where we invite Him to dwell.”

Let us invite Him to dwell in our conferences, in our schools, in our churches, and in our hospitals.

“God dwells where we invite Him to dwell.”

1 Ellen G. White, in Testimonies to Ministers, p. 361.
as it become acceptable for Adventists to attend training seminars during the Sabbath if they are working in the field of nursing, ambulance work, or volunteer emergency groups that work during life-threatening natural disasters? I have always believed it unacceptable.

Some individuals employed in such occupations and professions attend these sessions on the Sabbath because: (a) Jesus did say that “it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath” (Matt. 12:12, NIV) and (b) the range of accepted Sabbath employment has in many places so widened that almost any function that has humanitarian overtones is tolerated. The first factor is, of course, legitimate; the second is not.

How do we know the difference? By discerning, first of all, whether or not the wage-earning activity is absolutely essential to the survival of the sick or helpless. And, given a positive response to that inquiry, whether or not it is conducted in an atmosphere impacted by Sabbathkeeping principles.

The growing tendency in our churches to sanction any and all humanitarian-related wage earning on the Sabbath, i.e., ambulance drivers, hospital dietitians, police officers, firefighters—even physicians and nurses who labor under common, everyday secular circumstances—is, I believe, a far too liberal interpretation of Jesus’ words and example.

And, as attending regular classes on the Sabbath to earn a degree that qualifies one for such a job is not appropriate, neither is attending classes on the Sabbath to enhance one’s ability to perform the job.

There are delicate differences to be considered when addressing this issue, and I recommend that you consult your pastor, church board, and when necessary, local conference officials for advice regarding the particularly troubling aspects of this question.

What disturbs me about our church is all the new ways of doing things—music, dress, diet, church services, institutional practices, and so many other things. The Bible says, “I am the Lord, I change not” (Mal. 3:6). Why don’t we hold to the tried-and-true paths? There is much in Scripture that warns us against departing from the “Thus saith the Lord,” i.e., the word of our “unchanging God.” The reasons we sometimes do are numerous: yielding to peer pressure, loss of faith, presumption, etc., all of which are connected to the failure of maintaining a strong devotional life. But “creeping compromise” is not a reality for individuals whose roots are sincerely planted in the fertile soil of Scripture.

On the other hand, some among us tragically misapply this text to mean that rules, rituals, and traditions connected with church life and operations should never be altered. That is not the case.

What is it about God that does not change? His just personality and His pure and holy character. However, His methodologies, i.e., His answers to problems and people, do change. Hebrews 1:1-3 tells us how He changed media in communicating with the human race. And very practically, as Scripture delineates, He changed over time toward Israel regarding issues of marriage and divorce, residence, diet, and governance. There are also Abraham's classic conversations (Gen. 18:22-33) in which God “changed” several times relative to His decision to destroy Sodom.

The verse you quote does not introduce a God who rigidly does the same thing the same way all the time, but rather a God whose unalterable goodness is appropriately applied in all circumstances in every generation.

That is what Augustine had in mind when he wrote, “For any thing, whatever in short be its excellence, if it is changeable, does not truly exist; for there is no true existence wherever nonexistence has also a place. . . . Sift the mutations of things, thou wilt find Was and Will Be: think on God, thou wilt find the Is, where Was and Will Be cannot exist.”

Calvin B. Rock is a general vice president of the General Conference. He holds doctoral degrees in ministry and Christian ethics.
Adventist Students Provide Campus Witness in the Philippines

BY GEBRE WORANCHA, WHO IS PURSUING A DOCTORATE IN EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT CENTRAL LUZON STATE UNIVERSITY.

They come from Kenya, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Myanmar. In all, Adventist students from nine African and Asian countries come to the Philippines to attend Central Luzon State University (CLSU).

Noted for its research-focused studies and its wide variety of doctoral programs, this government-sponsored institution attracts students from 25 countries. According to a study conducted last year, all foreign graduate students attending CLSU Seventh-day Adventist students ranked second in number, while Buddhists ranked first.

These Adventist scholars are happy with their school activities in CLSU. They are happy because every area of study is designed to meet the needs of the developing countries through quality research and development projects.

First Things First

Despite the absence of a central place of worship on the campus, the Adventist students maintain their faith in God and their personal and group commitment to their Christian call by putting first things first. The beautiful songs of godly brothers and sisters ring out during morning and evening worship.

Those who reside on the campuses of different colleges get together and enjoy their house worship. These students are grateful to God for allowing them religious freedom within the university environment. They are also thankful to the university administration for recognizing the Adventist body of believers on campus and for not scheduling classes on their worship day—Saturday.

The Adventist witness is often noticed by campus officials and staff members. The university administration and the teaching faculty respect the Adventist students. Does that make other students jealous? One day a non-Adventist African said, “It is unfortunate that the CLSU administration seems to think that any student from the continent of Africa is a Seventh-day Adventist.”

We prayed for the opportunity to open an Adventist student center. Then one day a dormitory manager at the
housing unit where most of the African Adventist students reside. Announced that a study room would be made available for vesper services. The manager also announced that all single undergraduate students should attend the Adventist worship program on Friday evenings. She promised to attend the meetings to hear the Word of God.

Happiest Day
Each week the students go to a town called Muñoz, where a small church is located. In 1994 “the local Adventist church had an attendance of three to four elderly persons,” an observer said. Today this small church has more people than the building can accommodate. Some of the believers sit outside in a small shed. The majority of the attendees are non-Filipinos. Most of them transferred their church membership to this small church, and they actively participate in many activities, including preaching, Sabbath school, children’s programs, singing, and community services.

Grand Celebration
A regular prayer of these Adventist CLSU students has been for the success of their academic efforts. As the result of their petitions, God rewarded many CLSU students with high academic achievements. Recently three doctoral students graduated with Ph.D. degrees. The event provided a joyous day for their fellow students and members of the Muñoz church.

As they witness to others and pursue their educational goals, Adventist students at CLSU realize that “unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain” (Ps. 127:1, NIV).

This is true of those who desire educational growth. Unless the Lord endorses and places His unseen signature on that “great diploma,” no degree holds true value. A godly education is attained when the student is motivated by the commitment to magnify the name of the Lord and to fulfill God’s mission.

While some of these students will eventually work for the Adventist Church, others will undoubtedly work as committed church members in secular professions. Through their witnessing experiences at Central Luzon State University many of these students have learned that education becomes most powerful when it’s used as a tool to advance God’s cause.

“For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels” (Luke 9:26), declared Jesus.

Church Rejects Use of Violence in Balkan Region

In response to the ongoing crisis in the Balkans, the Adventist Church released a statement rejecting the use of violence for conflict resolution, reaffirming its nonpolitical stance, committing itself to its ongoing mission of humanitarian aid, urging a negotiated settlement, and calling for prayers for peace. The full text of the statement follows, released by the Office of Public Affairs at the Seventh-day Adventist Church world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland:

Seventh-day Adventist Church Statement on Crisis in Kosovo

The Seventh-day Adventist Church expresses its grave concern regarding the situation in Yugoslavia, in particular in the Kosovo province. While being concerned about the we-being of its many members and operation of its church organization in this part of the world, the church is even more concerned about the worsening humanitarian situation in Kosovo and elsewhere in the region, with hundreds of thousands of displaced and homeless people.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a worldwide religious community and, as a matter of principle, endeavors not to be involved in political issues.

The church has consistently refused to do so and intends to maintain this position in the current crisis centered on Kosovo. Nevertheless, it rejects the use of violence as a method for conflict resolution, be it ethnic cleansing or bombing. With the church’s long tradition of working actively and quietly for human rights, including in particular religious freedom and the rights of minorities, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is ready to do its part.

The church will endeavor to do so through its world organizational structure, in cooperation with the leaders and members of the church in the Balkan region, to foster a deeper understanding of and greater respect for human rights and nondiscrimination, to meet crying human needs, and to work for reconciliation between national, ethnic, and religious communities.

In the current crisis, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is committed to doing what it can, through the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), the humanitarian agency established by the church, to bring relief to the many thousands of refugees, irrespective of religion, ethnicity, or social status, that have fled from the Kosovo province into neighboring states, while also closely monitoring the situation and needs of the civilian population in Yugoslavia, in and outside of Kosovo. The church will utilize its infrastructure in the region in its relief efforts.
Faith in Foxholes

BY BRUCE MANNERS, CHIEF EDITOR, SIGNS PUBLISHING COMPANY, AUSTRALIA

Another series of tear-stained faces appeared on the television news last night. A cute, sad-faced girl looks at me through barbed wire in today’s newspaper. I’ve heard angry voices on the radio. War in Europe. A gain.

Television shows people being displaced, losing touch with families, dying.

“It’s one of those regrettable things that happen in a campaign like this,” NATO commander General Wesley Clark explained a NATO warplane’s hit on a train.

His comment brought no comfort to survivors or the families of those killed. Or to Ivan, who has family in the region. I sat behind him in church last Sabbath.

For those of us a half world away, the war is a television event. Slipped in between our favorite television shows we may fail to recognize the reality. Look at those tear-stained faces again.

A saying came out of World War II: “There are no atheists in foxholes.” Perhaps true, but how many in foxholes cursed God for allowing them to be caught in their situation?

“God is with us” is a statement of dramatic faith from the foxholes.

And it can be said only as we understand the bigger battle—the battle between God and Satan. This behind-the-scenes conflict does break out in our minds, our homes, in the streets of our cities and the nations of our world.

Just because we don’t see His tear-stained face on the nightly news doesn’t mean God isn’t there. Just ask Djordje Popov (aged 77) and his wife, Almalkom (aged 69). They’re from Novi Sad, a city that has experienced heavy bombing.

“With no basement shelter, we remained in our home, trusting to God,” they told Adventist News Network. That’s faith in foxholes.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church urges the international community and government authorities involved to push for an early end to the crisis, on the basis of Christian, moral, and ethical principles, of human rights, and of good faith negotiations that are fair to all concerned and that may lead to better relationships.

The church further asks all its members and the faith community in general to pray for divine assistance in restoring peace and goodwill to this suffering region.

Washington Adventist Hospital Among Top 100 for Angioplasty

Washington Adventist Hospital in Takoma Park, Maryland, has been rated as one of the top 100 cardiology programs in the United States for angioplasty services.

The rating came as part of a study by HCIA, Inc., a nationally recognized firm that collects, manages, and distributes comparative health-care information. The study, based on an analysis of more than 12 million cases, used clinical and financial measurers.

“We’re honored to receive this recognition,” says Cory Chambers, president of Adventist HealthCare, which operates the hospital. “We have worked very hard to develop a center of excellence that enables us to provide innovative cardiology services.”

Adventist Review Magazine Celebrates 150 Years of Adventist Publishing

In November 1848 Ellen G. White had a vision in which God told her that the church must print a little paper, and that it would grow into a great worldwide program.

From that small periodical, Present Truth, first printed in 1849, the first Adventist publishing association, now known as the Review and Herald Publishing Association, was established in Battle Creek, Michigan, in 1861. Today the church has 56 publishing houses around the world.

To kick off the commemoration of 150 years of publication, the editors of the Adventist Review went to Battle Creek on the weekend of March 26, 27. Review editor William G. Johnson, commenting on why Battle Creek had been picked as the site for the commemorative celebration, said, “Of all the towns that you might go back to, Battle Creek has to be the town. We are looking back over 150 years of Adventist publishing. This is the place where the publishing house was organized, where we organized as a church, where the Christian Record was started, and of course where we took the Seventh-day Adventist name. So if you go anywhere, it has to be Battle Creek.”

As a part of the celebration the Adventist Communication Network televised Advent Worship Hour live by satellite Sabbath morning from the Battle Creek...
Test Your Global Mission IQ

1. Maranatha Volunteers International recently completed 200 churches in Punjab, Haryana, and Bihar. More than 400 attended a church opening ceremony in the village of Malluval. A multicolored shamiana protected an overflow crowd from the hot sun. As the people arrived one could hear the greeting Jesu Masikh! ("Alleluia! Praise the Lord!"). In an atmosphere of joy and singing, many came forward bringing their thank offerings. In what country did this inaugural ceremony take place?
   A. Bhutan  C. Turkmenistan
   B. Cambodia  D. India

2. From the point of view of Global Mission initiatives, the following countries have something in common—similar "Adventist density" (the same number of Adventists in proportion to the overall population): India, the Netherlands, Russia, Sweden, and Taiwan. What is your guess as to their "Adventist density"?
   A. 51-150 Adventists per million
   B. 251-350 Adventists per million
   C. 1,150-1,250 Adventists per million
   D. 3,050-3,150 Adventists per million

Answers:
1. D. India. In Orissa state only about 2,300 members are sharing the Adventist message with more than 36 million people. But many new companies have formed, and church buildings are being constructed. At the end of 1997 there were 130 companies.
2. B. The listed countries are home to between 251 and 350 Adventist church members for each million persons in the population. The world average is 1,611; the United States proportion is 3,085 (1997). The lowest density countries in the world are found in the Arab nations of North Africa and the Middle East. The highest density countries are in the Caribbean Sea, where in some cases about one person in every 12 is an Adventist.

—Compiled by F. Donald Yost, Office of Global Mission, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

What’s Upcoming

May 22  Global Baptism
June 5  Bible Correspondence School Emphasis
June 12  Women’s Ministry emphasis
June 26  Thirteenth Sabbath Offering for the Southern Asia Division
"I Yam What I Yam"

Our attitude affects every situation.

BY THELMA HOEHN

WEN I FACED DISAPPOINTMENT as a child, my mother said, “All things work together for good.” Mother was right. She understood one of the great principles of living; our attitude affects every situation, good or bad. Tough-minded optimists emerge stronger from tragedies when they approach problems with a can-do philosophy. Recent studies suggest that upbeat people do better in school, are healthier, and perhaps even live longer than pessimists.

There is more to being an optimist than having a bright outlook. They must be tough-minded, practical, realistic, determined, and know that God is still ruler. Bad things happen. When setbacks occur, they must acknowledge them and pray for strength and guidance.

Eighteen years ago this September I faced one of the greatest challenges of my life. My pediatrician came to my hospital bed and said, “We believe your newborn son has Down’s syndrome. We want to do further testing.” I felt as though an enemy had first thrust and then twisted a sword in my chest. The pain was unspeakable. My initial reaction was to crawl in a hole to escape reality.

Some well-meaning friends advised me to find an institution to care for my son. They said maybe I should forget all about him and go on with my life. A nother friend suggested that perhaps I should counsel with an adoption agency. These so-called friends reminded me of Job and his friends in the Bible. They advised him to curse God and die. It was then that I remembered my mother’s advice: “If you carry on, one day something good will happen—something that wouldn’t have happened if not for that previous disappointment.”

Life has options. If one approach failed, I tried another. Life was difficult. I admitted that. Truly successful people don’t engage in Pollyanna speeches about how wonderful things are when they are not. It was wrong to think that merely lifting my chin and having the right attitude would make everything fine. In my pain, I cried out to Jesus, “I have a handicapped child. I feel disappointed. I hurt inside.” It was important that I accepted and expressed those feelings.

I found myself spending more time with positive Christian friends than negative people. I sought out friends who encouraged me, prayed with me, and gave me strength. I found it refreshing to spend time with those who could breathe hope into me.

With Kevin, my goal was to rehearse success. I pictured him accomplishing his goals and encouraged him to do just that. I didn’t talk about failure, and he developed good mental skills in certain areas. At age 8 Kevin would spend a whole day studying a page of a book so he could surprise me with a near-perfect reading that night. Today he reads entire books. And whenever a family member’s birthday nears, Kevin unerringly reminds me to send presents and cards.

As Kevin grows older, I continue to encourage and pray with him. Whatever he lacks in reasoning ability he makes
up in temperament. I continue to appreciate his special qualities. He is a particularly good-natured child whose grin meets me at every turn. Despite his intellectual limitations, he remains determined when it comes to mastering tasks within his capabilities. In school Kevin made steady progress in reading. But math gave him trouble. I tried fruitlessly to teach him the intricacies of money and making change. When he met with defeat Kevin would sigh and, taking a line from Popeye, say, “I yam what I yam, Mom.” He is a family peacemaker, a varsity-letter swimmer, and a Boy Scout. And he is proud of what he is.

Kevin’s Boy Scout director, Tom, recently took a group of Scouts on a bicycle hike. “OK, this is going to be tough,” began Tom as he launched into a lecture on hard work. “But it will be worth it.” He looked down at Kevin and noted an appealing child-like openness. He wondered if Kevin was going to be able to complete the hike.

“I’m sorry,” Kevin interrupted. “But when do we start?” Tom instantly liked him. The group set out on the bicycle trek. The ride was difficult, but Kevin never held the “pack” back. Kevin had been taking swimming classes since infancy in order to strengthen his muscles. They had made him stronger both mentally and physically and had given him the stamina to keep up.

I began looking for other ways to celebrate Kevin’s growing self-confidence. One of Kevin’s teachers suggested the high school swim team. There was no record of a person with Down’s syndrome ever having participated on the swim team. Kevin’s response was “I love swimming.” His determination astonished me. He arrived at swim practice four mornings a week at 5:30 a.m. He swam for another hour and a half in the afternoon. His dedication and determination paid off.

Kevin received the high school athletic varsity letter in swimming. At a pizza party for the school swim team, coach Chris said, “Kevin, we understand you are the only Down’s syndrome swimmer to have competed on our swim team. How does that make you feel?”

“I don’t know if I should say this,” Kevin answered, “but when are we going to eat?” The swim team roared its approval. This was a pizza feed, after all, not an interview. Everyone was hungry. Once again Kevin pointed out the obvious.

Other times Kevin’s insight turns more serious. Kevin voluntarily assumes the critical role of family peacemaker. After the recent funeral of his grandmother, Kevin sat quietly and listened to my sister and me divide family heirlooms. Both she and I wanted the grandfather clock. A few minutes later, Kevin arose from his inconspicuous spot in the corner and said, “It’s only things, Mom. It’s only things. It’s not worth arguing about.” He helped us place our priorities where they belonged.

In quiet times I reflect upon my mother’s words: “If you carry on, one day something good will happen—something that wouldn’t have happened if not for that previous disappointment.” I often wonder what direction our lives might have taken if I had placed Kevin for adoption . . . or put him into an institution. Life would be empty without him. It is as Mother said: “All things work together for good to them that love God” (Rom. 8:28).

P.S. Kevin will graduate from high school this June.

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Ellen White’s Disturbing Disclaimer of 1904

Did she really deny her prophetic gift?

BY ROGER W. COON

RUMOR FLIES,” THE ANCIENT ROMAN poet Virgil lamented in his epic, the Aenid.\(^1\) Winston Churchill amplified the metaphor in his characteristically robust style: “A lie gets halfway around the world before Truth has a chance to get its pants on.”\(^2\) And Mark Twain would impishly seek the last word: “One of the most striking differences between a cat and a lie is that the cat has only nine lives.”\(^3\)

Thus would all three characterize the surprising speed and agility, as well as the remarkable staying power and longevity, of falsehood parading as truth. Nearly a century after the event, the rumor still circulates among professional critics of Ellen White (and even within some circles in the Seventh-day Adventist Church itself) that some 60 years after her divine call to the prophetic office in December 1844, Ellen White finally and publicly disclaimed her prophetic role within this denomination.

What are the facts?

On Sabbath morning, October 1, 1904, Ellen White, by her own estimate, addressed between 2,500 and 3,000 worshippers in the Battle Creek Tabernacle. The next afternoon, October 2, she spoke again in the Tabernacle before an additional 2,000, which this time included many non-SDA citizens of that city.\(^4\)

On both occasions Mrs. White made personal reference to herself, vis-à-vis her formal work for the church. And upon both she spoke extemporaneously, without notes.

According to Maggie Hare’s stenographic notes of the Sabbath morning sermon, Mrs. White offhandedly remarked: “They say she is a prophetess, they say she is this and that and the other thing—I claim to be no such thing. I will tell you what I want you all to know, that I am a messenger that God has taken from a feeble, very feeble child, and in my girlhood gave me a message. . . . Now I want to tell you this, that Mrs. White does not call herself a prophetess or [even] a leader of this people. She calls herself simply messenger.”\(^5\)

On Sunday afternoon stenographer W. E. Cornell reported that she said: “I am not, as I said yesterday, a prophet. I do not claim to be a leader; I claim to be simply a messenger of God, and that is all I have ever claimed.”\(^6\)

In the fifth volume of his definitive six-volume biography, Arthur L. White aptly characterized these extemporaneous remarks by his grandmother as “an unguarded statement.”\(^7\) They came to be widely misunderstood, both within and without Adventism. Some viewed the statements as an admission that Ellen White did not, after all, consider herself to be an inspired prophet of the Lord—a role officially and publicly accorded her by her church as early as 1867.\(^8\)

On Monday, October 3, Battle Creek’s newspapers trumpeted the news, “under flaming headlines,” according to a Review report, that Mrs. White had now personally and publicly disclaimed the prophetic office and “much emphasis was laid upon the great deception that it was claimed she had practiced upon this people.”\(^9\)

Transcontinental wire services of news agencies spread the story still further.\(^10\) But in fact she had done no such thing!

A brief statement of clarification from Ellen White’s own pen appeared four months later in the January 26, 1905, edition of the Review, but misinterpretation and misuse of this
“unguarded statement” continued. On May 26, 1906, in a further effort at clarification, Mrs. White wrote that even within the church, “some have stumbled over the fact that I said that I did not claim to be a prophet, and they have asked, Why is this?”

Notable among the “some” that had “stumbled” was Alonzo T. Jones (1850-1923), a prominent Adventist religious liberty leader, former Review editor, and conference administrator. In 1903, already at odds with the Adventist prophet, Jones had left denominational employment, contrary to her express counsel, to join forces with Battle Creek Sanitarium’s formidable medical superintendent, Dr. John Harvey Kellogg. Jones thus began warring publicly against Mrs. White and elected denominational leadership.

On May 22, 1907, Jones was finally defrocked as an Adventist clergyman by General Conference Executive Committee action. Six months later, on November 10, he was disfellowshipped as a member of the Battle Creek Tabernacle congregation. His 72-page anti-Ellen White tirade—an “open letter” to the church (Some History, Some Experiences, and Some Facts), originally read aloud in the Battle Creek Sanitarium Chapel on March 4, 1906, and subsequently published—created no small stir among Adventists.

Four months later an extended effort at clarification resulted in a longer article (“A Messenger”) from Ellen White that appeared in the July 26, 1906, Review.

But before we examine the two particular reasons Mrs. White herself offered for her rather oblique (and widely misunderstood) reference in the October 1904 Battle Creek presentations, it will be helpful, first, to note a significant point:

Though Ellen White never arrogated to herself the title of prophet, she nevertheless never disclaimed the role of a prophet—nor, for that matter, did she ever correct anyone else who accorded her that title.

Let’s examine her two reasons for this seemingly strange policy.

The Popular Definition

While Ellen White had no trouble with the biblical definition of the category of prophet, she had a considerable problem with the popular definition of the term. Basically, the distinction is between the dictionary denotation and the popular connotation of the word itself.

Much of the public in her day (as in our own) tended to limit the role of a prophet to that of a fortune-teller—a predictor of the future.

While Ellen White most assuredly did make predictions of the future—some of which came to pass in her own time, others being realized in our time, and a few yet to find final fulfillment—the prediction of the future wasn’t a major function of her prophethood.

Former executive secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate Robert W. Olson publicly estimated that “probably not more
than 2 percent” of the estimated 25 million words that she penned during her literary career “deal with future events”; for “her writings deal largely with Christian experience.”

Even among biblically recognized prophets there were some whose major function lay elsewhere than in predicting the future. Moses, that towering Old Testament figure, uttered a few messianic prophecies, but his role was largely that of a leader, an administrator. In the New Testament, Jesus characterized His first cousin, John the Baptist, as the “greatest” of all the prophets (Matt 11:11)—yet (1) “John did no miracle” (John 10:41); (2) John wrote none of the Bible; and (3) there is no biblical evidence that John made any prediction of the future, save perhaps his offhand remark that One was coming after him whose shoelaces he felt himself unworthy to untie (Mark 1:7).

Prophets in Bible times had wide-ranging responsibilities, far transcending that of prediction alone. Many were God’s spokespersons to address moral wrongs in the society, and they frequently assumed pastoral and even counselors roles. Ellen White did not wish either her church or the public at large to limit the scope of her activity to the narrow category of mere predictor of future events.

To heighten the emphasis involved in this crucial semantical distinction between title and role, Ellen White wrote in the July 26, 1906, Review this explanation:

"My work includes much more than the word ‘prophet’ signifies. . . . To claim to be a prophetess is something that I have never done. If others call me by that name, I have no control over the title. In Ellen White’s day this was especially true."

Joseph Smith (1805-1844), founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (better known today as the Mormons), claimed that in 1827—the very year of Ellen White’s birth—an angel named Moroni appeared to him. This angel, said Smith, delivered to him some golden plates upon which was inscribed, in a language known as “reformed Egyptian,” the Book of Mormon. Smith further said that Moroni then instructed him to translate this work by means of a Urim and Thummim and publish it in English.

In 1843, at age 38, Smith introduced the doctrine of polygamy into the 20,000-member Mormon colony at Nauvoo, then the largest city in the state of Illinois. Most non-Mormons, and many even within Smith’s own church, violently disagreed with this practice.

Joseph Smith not only styled himself “prophet” but also added the terms of “revelator” and “seer” to his self-proclaimed official title.

In February 1844, as the first political salvos of the election of 1844 were being fired, Smith announced his candidacy for the office of president of the United States. The thought of a polygamist occupying the White House so scandalized public opinion and inflamed a wave of hostility that a newspaper editor in Nauvoo dared publish a fiery editorial denouncing Smith.

Frontier vengeance was often swift, and Smith promptly ordered Mormon night-riding vigilantes to burn the dissenter’s editorial office and press to the ground.

Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were subsequently arrested for “rioting and treason,” and were temporarily incarcerated at Carthage, Illinois, pending trial. On June 27, 1844, a mob took matters into their own hands, illegally storming the jail, killing Smith and his brother in a pitched battle.

The distasteful and immoral character of the practice of polygamy became inextricably associated with the word “prophet” in the public mind for decades to follow.

Indeed, Ellen White herself gave as one prime reason for writing her first autobiographical account (book 2 of the four-volume series Spiritual Gifts, published in 1860) her distinct desire to disassociate herself and the Advent movement from that of the followers of Joseph Smith:

“A’s the cry of Mormonism is often raised, especially in the West, at the introduction of the Bible argument of..."
the perpetuity of spiritual gifts [and especially that of the gift of prophecy, which she herself never unblushingly claimed], I have felt anxious that my brethren should know what my experience has been, and where it has been.

"When at Knoxville, Iowa, March 1860, we learned that a man had been reporting that he knew me and my husband twenty years ago, when we [allegedly] were leaders among the Mormons at Nauvoo. At that time I was only twelve years old!"24

Ellen White wanted no one to link her gift of prophetic utterance with that of the polygamous "prophet" Joseph Smith.

In conclusion, it is true that Ellen White never claimed for herself the title of prophet, for the two coercive reasons offered above. But it is equally true that she never, ever, disclaimed the role of prophet—nor corrected anyone else who accredited her with this "spiritual gift" of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:1-31; Eph. 4:8-16).

The evidence of her prophetic gift must ultimately persuade, not by title or office, but when earnest seekers find in her counsels and encouragement the same Voice that speaks to them in Scripture.

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BY JUDY L. SHULL

THE GATHERING OF SPECTATORS WAS larger than anyone could have imagined. This was the event. Nothing like it had ever been witnessed before.

They watched, step by step, as T.C. climbed toward the top of the platform. At the top she stood, gazed into the distance, took a quick breath, and proceeded slowly out to the end of the board.

The crowd waited with hushed expectation. The sun blazed bright in the clear blue sky. Slowly the diver's toes curled over the edge. Nervous perspiration glistened on her hot skin. Those assembled waited with an unconscious tension—unwilling to breathe, afraid that any distraction would cause T.C. to lose her concentration. With one thought the spectators willed the diver to proceed. They shuddered inwardly at the thought that T.C. might lose her focus and step back.

Even though she had been told she could do this, still she wondered. She had planned for this moment for as long as she could remember. She had imagined her movements over and over in her waking and sleeping thoughts.

Arms hung relaxed at her side while muscles rippled just under her skin. Her preparation was apparent. Toe and leg muscles tightened in anticipation. The diver drew back her arms, extending them straight behind her. She bent into a semicrouch. She tucked her head briefly, almost in an attitude of prayer. It was time for total commitment: to take the dive, or to relax and wait until . . . until?

Suddenly, almost unexpectedly, T.C. bounced up, then down, hitting the board with amazing power as she catapulted into the air, rays of sparkling sunshine all around her.

The flight was breathtaking. The world disappeared as T.C. experienced the sensation. Air rushed past her as she noticed the water below. With a joyous movement T.C. raised her hands over her head and sliced neatly through its refreshing coolness.

As she felt the water envelop her, thrilled by her flight, T.C. wondered why she'd hesitated. She wondered why she had worried about those final steps. Moments later her head cleared the surface, and the air exploded with deafening cheers. T.C. finally felt at home. Leaning back, she floated on the water as the sun shone warmly on her face.

The church is likewise poised at the very brink of history. The Son is watching, as are the inhabitants of the universe; the anticipation is high. Will she or won't she take the final steps toward glorious flight? Even after a lifetime of preparation, the church sometimes hesitates, not quite ready to commit to that final plunge.

But that leap of faith, that commitment, is the beginning of an incredible trip. The flight that takes us to the refreshing air of heaven and the loving arms of our heavenly Father is only the beginning of an eternity with our Creator.

The final steps need to be taken. We have prepared for the end, the gospel of the kingdom is going to all people, our muscles are flexed. It's time to let the Lord complete that for which we've long been preparing. Let's not relax, but burst upward with strength and courage to finish what God has begun in us so long ago.

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The worship service was over at the Koganei church in Tokyo. The last to leave the sanctuary, Pastor Wu paused for a moment and glanced around this familiar place. His eye fell on the little model of the new church building, and in the quietness his thoughts went back more than 10 years to when he had first heard the Adventist message, on Adventist World Radio... 

God’s Universal Language
Born of Korean and Chinese parents in northeastern China, in the area known as Manchuria, Wu became fascinated with languages. While studying Japanese at university one day, he took a break and tuned the dial of his shortwave radio. He heard a Japanese program and, combining study with pleasure, settled in to listen. The program was appealing, and he was delighted to hear a Korean program begin when the Japanese program ended. So he kept listening, and was delighted again when the next language he heard was Mandarin.

The broadcasts became a daily pleasure, and Wu soon wrote for Bible lessons—eventually completing lessons in three languages. His letters to the Japanese Voice of Hope (V O H) were reported in their newsletter, and a church member, Tomiko Ohmuro, wrote the V O H to say she would be glad to correspond with the young man.

Wu graduated in 1989 and, returning to his home province, began teaching Japanese in a university. The next few years were busy ones as his faith grew. In 1990 he met American missionaries setting up a NEWSTART health program, helped establish a small house church in which he was in charge of Sabbath school and young people’s meetings, purchased a church building for the group, helped with evangelism and the establishment of the Korean Adventist Church’s Sam Yook University Foreign Language Institute in China—and got married.

On August 20, 1993, Wu was baptized with 30 other new believers, and then ordained a few months later as a local elder. By then, Wu says, he was feeling the need of some formal instruction.

He was still corresponding with Mrs. Ohmuro, and she rallied friends and church members so that Wu could attend Japan Missionary College (Saniku Gakuin College). Graduating in 1997, Wu began a graduate degree in Asian studies at the prestigious Waseda University and became an intern at Koganei church.

Looking Ahead, Looking Back
His reverie ended, Wu thought with excitement of the years of service that lay ahead: they would build the Koganei church, then he would return to China, ready to use his extraordinary language gifts in the service of his church and the people of China.

Smiling, he touched the church model lightly, then went quickly out into the sunlight to join his family. His wife was talking to Mrs. Ohmuro (with whom he had corresponded for so many years), a member of his own Koganei church. Wu thought about the people who had shown him Christ and all the ways God had led him through those years—from broadcasts on Adventist World Radio to a future of sharing his faith in three languages—and he was very, very glad.

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A Horn Player’s Dilemma

All of my brass-playing life I have played the trombone. As a school band director I have dabbled at other instruments, but never seriously. A few months ago, however, because of the needs of the orchestra I play in, I decided to take up the French horn. As it turns out, this selfless act is more easily conceived than accomplished.

I knew the physical demands would be different than with the trombone, and I expected to be challenged. What I did not fully understand was how the French horn would play with my mind. The orchestra’s visiting guest conductor recently told me that the orchestral musicians who most commonly have emotional breakdowns are players of the oboe and French horn. I have no difficulty whatever understanding that.

Horn players routinely live at the edge of calamity. They perform demanding music on an instrument that affords a very small margin of error. According to my sympathetic conductor friend, most conductors have “a fairly phlegmatic attitude toward missed notes coming from the French horn section.” (The reader is left to ponder why he was telling me this.) Good conductors know that if they bear down too hard on horn players they will probably play worse—not for lack of trying but for lack of confidence.

Here is the horn player’s dilemma: the instrument is responsive only to one who approaches it with freedom and confidence. Timidity simply will not do. But the physical difference between a fine French horn performance and an awful one can be very small. Catastrophe seems always to lurk nearby, and when it occurs it is a public event. One is to do this with confidence? The instrument seems designed to destroy the very confidence that it demands.

The challenge for French horn players, says the conductor, is to care very much about playing well, but not to care too much. One must strive diligently for flawless execution, but not be devastated when the execution is not flawless.

A sympathetic and encouraging conductor is a great boon to a French horn player who is straining at Brahms and Schubert for the first time. So far I have enough confidence to continue trying. Under different circumstances I would have despaired.

Recently I came upon a Scripture passage that can be for a struggling Christian what a sympathetic conductor is for a struggling French horn player: “This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything” (1 John 3:19, 20).

Too often Christians are overwhelmed by lack of confidence. Their attempts to live a Christlike life are flawed. But the more they focus on their miscues, the more their confidence wanes. Their hearts are not at rest.

The attitude encouraged by my conductor friend is needed by Christians as well as horn players: we ought to care very much about living well; but we ought not to care too much.

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free,” exclaims Paul. “Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery” (Gal. 5:1). The paradox of horn playing is also the paradox of the Christian life. One can try too hard. Confidence can be so damaged that continued failure is almost assured, but not for lack of trying.

Our need is for a serious, sustained striving for excellence in Christian living, combined with a healthy lack of worry about the occasional miscue. It’s not that the miscues don’t matter. (What self-respecting musician wants wrong notes?) It’s just that to focus on them will only make them worse and bring more in their train. This may be why Paul penned the seemingly incongruous words of Romans 6:14: “Sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.”

God’s grace expressed in Christ brings wonderful freedom to our lives. And if freedom and confidence are essential for French horn players, they must certainly be necessary for Christians too.

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