A New Mood in India

Our Candidate Is Winning

Waiting for a Visa
A Horn Player's Dilemma
I loved Bert Williams's piece (May 13 World Edition). His comparison of playing the French horn to a Christian's attempt to live a Christlike life was one of the best illustrations I've ever read. My favorite part (because I could identify with it so well) was “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 is so true. We need to focus on Christ and hang on loosely to everything else—including our own performance.

I also empathized with his anguish over the missed notes. I used to play the clarinet, and it's a humbling experience when instead of a clear, true note, you hear something closer to the sound of fingernails being scraped across a chalkboard.

—Cheryl Campbell
College Place, Washington

Church Rejects Use of Violence
The church wishes to negotiate a settlement with a band of thugs? (Newsbreak, May 13 World Edition) How do you negotiate with criminals? How do you determine how much evil is acceptable? The church doesn't believe violence should be used in conflict resolution? This, from the same church that takes people to court to prevent them from using its name? Doesn't the church realize that the court's power is based on the government's ability to enforce the law against unwilling citizens? Using violent means as required? How can the church support (and make use of) government power to enforce its rights and then reject the use of government power to enforce the rights of those who are victims of “ethnic cleansing”?

Perhaps the church also believes the Israelites should have negotiated with the Canaanites.

—Douglas Kingsfield
Aurora, Colorado

Abiding Principles
I found it interesting to read Calvin Rock's thoughts on "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" (May 13 World Edition).

I sure hope Mr. Rock is never traveling between home and church and happens to need an ambulance or a police officer. I also hope that he never needs to go to a "secular hospital" or an Adventist hospital and have any kind of treatment on the Sabbath.

You see, Mr. Rock, after having had to be in the hospital on Sabbath, I came to admire the hardworking janitorial staff. Not much thought is given to them, but I sure do like to see them cleaning up after everybody. Oh, and I'm sure you would consider their job nonhumanitarian as well as those of many other support people who, although they have no patient contact, make your stay more comfortable.

—Kimberly M. Trewitt
Belton, Texas

Since, in the final analysis, each one of us must come individually before the judgment seat, and because what is acceptable Sabbath activity varies across time and culture, I believe that it would have been more appropriate for Elder Rock to refer the writer to James 1:5 as the ultimate place for an answer to the question.

—Jane Guiles, R.N., Ph.D.
Silver Spring, Maryland

Who Said It?
I'm grateful and disappointed at the same time. See, there was this Ellen White quote that was my all-time favorite. I read it often, hung it on my wall, claimed the promises it entailed, and sent it out to others. And then, lo and behold, Roy Adams (May 13 World Edition) pulled the rug out from under me! The quote that “prayer is the answer to every problem in life” is still powerful, but since I found out my favorite author didn't say it, it was a disappointment. I am thankful,
though, that I found out the truth. Now I add my plea to Adams': Who said it? Does anybody know? A gain, thanks for sharing the uncertainty of the origin of that quote.

—Sarah L. Clark
Fort White, Florida

Roy Adams is collecting research and reader responses. Look for a follow-up article sometime this fall.—Editors

Disturbing Disclaimer
I enjoyed Roger Coon’s article “Ellen White’s Disturbing Disclaimer of 1904” (May 13 World Edition). It helped me, as a new member, clarify this issue by explaining the events of those days. I must admit, though, that I have a hard time thinking of John’s prophecy in Mark 1:7 as an offhand remark (see page 26).

The Bible makes it clear that John was preaching when he gave this prophecy and I truly believe that he was under divine guidance during this work. An offhand remark is usually thought of as coming from a person, not the inspiration of God.

—Greg Carey
Cassopolis, Michigan

Meaningful Magazine
I met a young woman at a women’s ministries retreat in Winnipeg, Manitoba, recently. She mentioned that she had not been to church in several years. However, a year and a half ago she subscribed to Adventist Review. (Her mother had part in that decision.)

After she’d decided to subscribe, she changed her mind . . . then changed it again . . . and finally did it! “I can’t tell you how much it has meant to me,” she said, and went on to talk about the magazine’s content. How it has made her connected to the church again, and how much she appreciated the coverage of the changes in General Conference presidents. And I thought you nice people ought to know.

—Penny Estes Wheeler
Editor, Women of Spirit
Via e-mail

Punishing the Rebellious Child
In your article (Angel Manuel Rodriguez, May 13 World Edition), you state that the theocratic government is no longer operative, and you further state that punishing the rebellious child comes from the fifth commandment. Would you selectively enforce the Ten Commandments, which were given under theocratic government? Would you say, as others, that the Ten Commandments are moral laws, thus not abolished?

The other matter is that we Christians (including Adventists) are not to take the matter to the secular courts as they are not fair (as I have experienced on my own). The Bible says so, the preachers say so, and many others discourage taking matters to courts of this world. I consider this matter an intrusion to our private family life by the government.

—Won H. Bae, D.D.S.
Via e-mail
Our mission is to uplift Jesus Christ through stories of His matchless love, news of His present workings, help for knowing Him better, and hope in His soon return.

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Vol. 176, No. 27
Seventh-day Adventists came to India more than a century ago, but for the most part the work has grown at a glacial pace. In the past several years, however, a sea change has occurred (see accompanying report beginning on page 8, “A New Mood in India”). What has made the difference?

Only the Lord knows the full story. In His divine wisdom He brings the time of reaping after many years of labor; He places together people and circumstances in opportune combinations for the moving of His Spirit on human hearts. We cannot know the mind of God, but we can discern matters from a human perspective, and this perspective reveals three factors important for the world Adventist Church—simplicity, love, and prayer.

In India the Lord is using simple means to bring men and women to accept Jesus Christ. His agents are largely young people with little or no education who love Him and share His love with others. In several cases these young people employ music: they travel from village to village imparting the joy and peace that Jesus’ presence brings. No budgeted work here and no dependence on props and gadgets—no pictures or PowerPoint—only the word of simple testimony accompanied by the Spirit’s power.

In a setting in which the majority of the hearers are illiterate, the presentation cuts to the bone, to the rudimentary gospel as the apostle Paul laid it out: “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (see 1 Cor. 15:1-5, NIV). For this audience, fine details of the 27 fundamental beliefs, let alone other theological areas that exercise some Adventists in developed societies, have no meaning. Simplicity is the keynote as the core of Adventism is conveyed—our message, mission, and basic lifestyle.

A spirit of love permeates the work—love for God and His children and a passion to share His love. Concerns about salary, fringe benefits, and perks seem minimal among these itinerant village workers. Touched by grace, they have become instruments of grace.

Here a practice unique to our fellowship takes on heightened significance—the ordinance of foot washing. Adventists are a people who love enough and care enough to do what Jesus did—wash one another’s feet in the attitude of a servant, regardless of caste, education, or social standing.

And the movement of the Spirit in India is a work of prayer. For centuries godly men and women have implored the Lord to bring a breakthrough, searching for ways to present Jesus in a manner that will soften hearts. In God’s good time those prayers and labors are bearing an abundant harvest.

I saw evidences of men and women and young people who speak to God one-on-one, who rely on Him to lead them, who bring every decision before Him. God is going on before, opening the way, doing amazing, incredible things.

The name of Jesus is powerful. People are learning that praying in that mighty name brings answers: the sick are healed, miracles are wrought, people on the thin edge of poverty find a resilience and providence for day-to-day existence.

India today confronts the Adventist Church with a stupendous challenge. Whereas for many years our work seemed slow and difficult, now we face a multitude eager to know more about Jesus and to welcome Him as a living power in their lives. How will we, how can we, respond to this moving of God’s Spirit?

I believe the lessons from India need to sink deep into the hearts of Adventists everywhere. I believe the Lord calls us to simplicity—in faith and trust, in courage, in obedience, in lifestyle, in presentation of the gospel. Ellen White, who wrote much in this area and whose counsel we do well to get back, advised: “God often uses the simplest means to accomplish the greatest results” (The Desire of Ages, p. 822).

The Lord began His work in simplicity, and He will finish it through simple means. And as God wraps up the work—and He is doing so in our day—it will be bathed in love and prayer.

A threefold cord, said the wise man, is not quickly broken (Eccl. 4:12). The threefold lesson from India will serve well the entire Adventist Church.
The End of the Story

BY MYRNA TETZ

M any times I’ve wondered what would happen if everyone in the Seventh-day Adventist Church tithed. After listening to a Lee Venden tape, I now have a new question. What would happen if everyone in the Seventh-day Adventist Church loved?

Venden, pastor of the Auburn, Washington, Seventh-day Adventist Church, says that if the church in North America had retained 80 percent of its children since its inception, the Adventist population here would be 8 million, and, based on that ratio, perhaps the world membership would be one billion.

Jumping to conclusions is not a good idea—such as if we loved, all our children would stay in the church. But when statistics tell us that the majority of fifth-generation Adventists have no assurance of salvation, we have to wonder about our understanding of how best to share God’s love.

Several years ago we moved to a college community where a sensitive and thoughtful preacher presided. One Sabbath the sermon was about God’s love and our response to it. I waited after church to speak to him because I had a question.

“Do you get credit for doing good things when you don’t want to do them?” I had asked, donning a smirk so he’d know that my theology wasn’t quite right. Ignoring my pretext, he said he’d bring me something to read.

A pastor had ever ministered, personally, to me before. I’d been a pastor’s wife. I shouldn’t need anything, should I? But I knew him well enough to expect a follow-through, so I wasn’t particularly surprised when, on Monday morning, Pastor Allan Robertson (now pastor of the Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada, Seventh-day Adventist Church) came to my office with excerpts from two books on the topic of love.

One writer expressed an uneasiness about his lack of selfless (agape) love. He explained that he did love some people, but they were usually the attractive ones or the ones who seemed to have a concern for him. He knew this was the “same old ‘swapout’ marketplace love Erich Fromm and others had described so well as characteristic of our capitalistic and consumer-type living. He also admitted that he didn’t feel very loving much of the time.”*

Where, he asked, was the genuine caring impetus he thought would be central to this experience of sharing Christian love? I could relate. That was my question.

In any kind of discussion on love and the reasons for doing what Christians should do, I’ve thought about the cross and Christ hanging there. Vertically hung from nails, sweating blood, asking that the whole ordeal be taken from Him: was He really liking the experience? Had He looked forward to it, greatly anticipating the joy He would feel from the pain of the piercing?

Probably not. And, in a crass comparison, I wasn’t really euphoric about dutifully taking food to an older person who had told others that she didn’t like my cooking. But she needed it, and I did it. Anyway.

So I wonder if we have neglected loving deeds because we don’t feel any particular glow from the heavens above or, for that matter, the earth beneath. Or do we wait for those loving feelings to come before we act because we wouldn’t want to have to level the accusation of hypocrisy on ourselves?

There’s a young woman, 17, who doesn’t think Adventists are all that loving. She has a vivacious, caring single mother. And two grandmothers. One grandmother will not write to her unless she writes to her. The other one writes whether or not she ever hears from her. One is not a Christian, and one is an Adventist. Which one is the grandmother who writes faithfully? I’d tell you the answer, but you either already know or you don’t want to know.

My pastor husband purports that real love—Christian love—is altruistic. It has nothing to gain and no stipulations. Christians do loving things because they love the Lord, and that’s the source of their motives. And that, he says, is the end of the story.

* Keith Miller, A Second Touch, p. 83.
HELP! HELP!

We're running low in some Give & Take categories. We can especially use brief submissions to:

- Adventist Quotes (profound or spontaneous)
- Adventist Life (anecdotes—especially from the world of adults)
- Dream Center (church-related dreams)
- Jots & Tittles (church-related tips)
- Readers' Exchange (requests for correspondence on a specific topic)
- And we always use church-related photos and captions, short poems, and other fast-paced items. Send submissions (which won’t be returned) to Give & Take, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904; fax: 301-680-6638; e-mail: 74617.15@compuserve.com.

HATS OFF TO ADVENTIST YOUTH

In this feature we pay tribute to outstanding Adventist youth (age 18 and under). We welcome your submissions, which must include a photo.

Shortly after he started studying with the Voice of Prophecy, Samuel Ndurya, of Bamba, Mombasa, Kenya, had registered 50 others—pastors, middle-aged adults, and his peers. “He started visiting Sunday schools of various churches and teaching them the songs, poems, and Bible verses he had learned,” reports Pastor Eliab Omworo, a Global Mission pioneer. “Children came to like him, and when their parents wanted to know how he is well versed in the Bible, Samuel just told them to register in the school of Bible prophecy.”

The Adventist Review honors Samuel Ndurya for going the extra mile for God. Look for your Review cap in the mail.

FOR THEIR HEALTH

JUST IN CASE: Ishaka Adventist Hospital in Bushenyi, Uganda, has just started a health insurance scheme for the communities around Bushenyi District, with the help of USAID, Health Partners USA, and the Ministry of Health of Uganda. Here Grace Mbabazi and Dan Kakunta explain the new project to members of a village. Driver Isaac Kiiza is at right. Photo by Ingrid Van Horf.
Mumbai, India: This is the most difficult report I have ever filed for the Adventist Review, because so much of what I want to convey lies close to my heart. I am still grasping to process what this trip has revealed.

Noelene and I first came to this city, then known as Bombay, nearly 40 years ago. We arrived wet behind the ears, married just one month, ready to take on India and win it for Christ. And we came by ship.

You either love India or hate it. We fell in love with India, especially its gentle and hospitable people. Our two children were born here; we stayed more than 15 years. When we eventually left, a large part of ourselves stayed behind.

I have been back in India for two weeks. Although I have made earlier visits on behalf of the church, this latest one, coming after a break of seven years, has affected me profoundly, more than any other.

Things have changed, in society and in the church.

A New Mood in India

In society and church the pace of change boggles the mind.
There is a new mood in India.

The Lufthansa flight deposited me right at 1:00 a.m. It was a welcome sight to see leaders from the local section (conference), who forfeited their rest to welcome me. Immediately they posed a question: Did I want to go to a hotel or accompany them to Lonavala, a couple hours’ drive away, where church leaders from around India were meeting in council?

That made for an easy choice. The opportunity to meet many former students from my teaching years at Spicer College was too good to pass up. We bundled my bags in the van and drove into the night.

Mumbai presents a picture of a city in rapid transition. Wide new roads and potholed back streets, booming construction and wretched hovels, cell phones and poverty—you see it all. Many things are different. Instead of ancient clunkers, the streets are choked with new automobiles of a variety of makes. Billboards are all in English. Cable TV brings in 70 channels for better or worse. Instead of a rupee tip, now you give 10 rupees, and even so you’re likely to be asked for a dollar instead (exchange rate: 42 to one). India is a nuclear power, and Mahatma Gandhi seems forgotten.

And now you can drink the water, available in low-priced bottles. The old days of boiling or chlorinating or iodizing are gone, and the scourge of Bombay belly or Delhi belly no longer haunts the visitor from abroad. You can’t escape the feel of the new India. With its rapidly expanding technology and population of nearly 1 billion, this is an economy ready for takeoff. Within a few years India should become a major player on the world scene.

The British rulers of India constructed a fine railroad network, and free India continued to build it up. But the new consumer economy wants its goods faster than rail can provide, so the roads are incredibly jammed with trucks. The government is racing to build new highways linking the major cities, but they are years behind.

On and on we sped through the night. Past miles of trucks with sleeping drivers lining the sides of the highway. Past the satellite city under construction that will join with Mumbai to make a metropolis of 30 million, the world’s largest. Past new flyovers and new apartment complexes and new industrial sites.

A head loomed the Western Ghats, a range of mountains that jut up from the coastal plain like dragons’ teeth. The ascent is steep and tortuous, but the 2,000-foot climb brings you to the cool air of the Deccan, the plateau that comprises central India.

A new four-lane expressway isn’t finished, so the old winding road was our only course. The old road has been divided into one-way traffic, but the huge increase in trucking makes it a nightmare. We slowly made our way up the mountain, fighting behemoths groaning, laboring, and belching clouds of diesel fumes as they fought for every inch of road. Then our forward progress came to a dead halt on the steepest grade. For 30 minutes we waited until a passage opened up between overheated trucks and we could proceed.

Sunday driving this is not. Which leads me to pass on a hint to the traveler to this colorful, wonderful land: you will enjoy your visit much more if you can avoid the roads. New, privately owned airlines provide outstanding domestic service, while air-conditioned rail travel is low-priced and fast.

It was a relief to reach Lonavala. By
the time I checked in and found my room it was 5:30 a.m.; my devotional message was scheduled for 8:00 a.m. Which would allow me one hour of welcome rest.

When we came to India in 1960, the total membership of the old Southern Asia Division, comprising India, Pakistan, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and Burma (Myanmar), was about 20,000. At every level the church was led and run by expatriates, and progress was glacial. Today India alone has 15 times the number of Adventists than the whole region then. National leaders have stepped into the ranks and, under the blessing of the Lord, have propelled the church into new strength.

I found a group of lively, positive leaders at Lonavala. Their openness to new ideas and possibilities was refreshing. The topics under discussion—principles of leadership, insurance (we have some 200,000 students in Adventist schools), investment of resources, and so on—were totally outside my sphere of reference from the India I had known.

From Lonavala I traveled to Pune (formerly Poona) for meetings at the Oriental Watchman Publishing House. Manager Robert Clive showed me a picture of the stamp that the authorities are about to issue to mark the centenary of the institution. In this country where Christians account for only 2 percent of the population and Adventists are but a tiny fraction, this stamp is a dramatic pointer of changing times.

Editor Edison Samraj introduced some of their latest publications. Chief among them are a set of six four-color books on religious instruction for elementary school children, a large book on plants with healing properties, and a groundbreaking collection of essays, Maturing of Adventism. The latter, edited by Samraj himself, pulls together the thinking of Adventists in various countries in an attempt to get major issues facing the world church out on the table.

Aventist publications of the India I knew relied heavily on foreign writers. Books and magazines essentially reprinted manuscripts and articles from the West. In the church of the new India all that has changed, and national writers are taking the lead.

The chief reason for my visit to the publishing house was to work out details for a Telugu edition of the Adventist Review. Among our members the largest number speak Telugu, hence the choice of that language by leaders of the church who requested the Review’s services. We hope to begin with the world edition in August; editions in Tamil and Hindi will follow.

Across town from the publishing house stands Spicer Memorial College, where I taught for 12 years, and I couldn’t resist the invitation for a quick visit. I found a college grown to more than 1,100 students and a campus much more built up.

But the role of Spicer College is changing. All along Spicer has been the church’s only senior college in India, but suddenly the picture has changed. Lowry Memorial College in the south has expanded to senior status, a new institution has arisen in Surat, and in the north both Roorkee and Assam training schools are moving to full college level. With the new configuration I will be interested to see how Spicer will continue to serve the church and India as our premier educational institution.

Welcome to Delhi, where the temperature is 48 degrees,” intoned the jetliner’s captain as we landed in the nation’s capital. A quick calculation: 48 degrees Celsius is 118.4 on the Fahrenheit scale!

For all its changes, India remains a hot country. And with the frantic rush to modernity in the big cities, the villages of India seem little different in their simple, basic ways of life than they were a thousand years ago. Here, in these 580,000 hamlets, three quarters of the people continue in the old paths.

But a new breeze is blowing across the hot landscape. Large numbers of people are increasingly attracted to the person and teachings of Jesus Christ. There is a readiness to accept Jesus such as I never witnessed in our 15 years here.

Christianity came early to the subcontinent. Tradition has it that the apostle Thomas brought the gospel to India; the alleged site of his burial can be identified near Chennai (formerly Madras). In the eighteenth century William Carey felt called to leave his native England and labor here, and a vast
missionary movement was born.

From Thomas to Carey to the most recent times India was deadly slow in embracing the teachings of Jesus. The missionaries are gone now, but something is happening. The prayers and the labors of the centuries are bearing fruit; the thousands of graves of earnest workers are blossoming into new life. In God's time He is bringing the harvest, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

Recently India received a black eye in the world press because of religious persecution. Christians have been harried and killed, churches destroyed. Several Adventists have been beaten, and we lost four or five churches.

It's important to note that the Indian constitution specifically guarantees religious liberty, including preaching and propagation of religion. The government is required by law to protect minorities.

This is a land with a long heritage of tolerance of differences. Violence and persecution are antithetical to the values of India, so the recent persecution of Christians has led to widespread searchings of heart. In particular, the grisly murder last January of an expatriate family—father and two sons burned alive in their car by a drunken mob—caused an outcry that still reverberates around the land.

A commission set up by the government concluded that the persecution of Christians had a political rather than a religious foundation. Because Christians voted for the Congress party, losers in the last national election, they were singled out for retaliation by political opponents.

In the midst of this rapidly changing scene, God is using simple means to bring Jesus to the forefront. Prayer is a big factor: people are learning that calling on the name of Jesus brings answers.

A woman holding her baby faces a desperate situation as a cobra wraps itself around her leg. She cries out to Jesus, and the cobra uncoils itself and slithers away.

A man breaks both wrists in a truck accident and can no longer find work. He prays in the name of Jesus, promising that if He heals him so he can work again, he will build a house of worship. And God works a miracle.

Simple men and women, people who live day and night with but the bare necessities of life, bear their testimony that God is real and answers prayer. And the wind carries their words with a power that is irresistible.

And something else is changing. A long with the hunger and thirsting for Jesus, new prayer halls are being constructed. They are simple, basic structures, built by Indians for Indians, and they are hugely important.

I know no country where a place of worship is so important to the believer and to the surrounding community as India. In the eyes of the village, the church has no standing and no permanence unless and until a house of worship is constructed. In the past national workers labored long and hard only to experience the frustration of seeing their congregation melt away because no building accompanied their work. But in the new India those who feel a burden for their country and have a desire for their fellows to hear about the God who answers prayer have hope that, after they work day and night, a prayer hall will follow.

As in many other countries, happiness homes, and stronger youth.

These dedication ceremonies in most cases were a high point in the social life of the community. The sarpanch (mayor), local political figures, and other leaders welcomed us effusively, and the people greeted us with garlands and music.

I was impressed by the hard work, skill, and professional efficiency of the Indian leaders of this magnificent ministry. And also their spirit of sacrifice. For example, Mohan Narayan, construction manager for Maranatha, spends most of his time on the road inspecting scattered building sites, and gets back to his wife and children in Hosur only once each month for a couple days.

Sometimes the work is dangerous. One Friday afternoon as Mohan and a local contractor were returning by motorcycle from a building project, they were accosted by a group of...
drunken men and boys carrying machetes and bows and arrows. The men grabbed them and tied them up, and discussed cutting off their limbs and burning them after sundown. Later Mohan realized that the men had mistaken them for individuals who earlier had defrauded the villagers of funds to build a school.

Mohan thought that they had no chance. "I prayed and thought of my wife and children," he told me. A s evening drew on, a tall man dressed in white suddenly appeared on the road. A though he did not belong to the tribal group holding them hostage, he spoke to them authoritatively in their language. The mob reluctantly decided to release them for a while. "Run!" said the tall man, and Mohan and the contractor ran to the motorcycle and escaped to safety.

On another occasion the vehicle in which Mohan was traveling ran over a mine set in the road by antisocial elements. The jeep rose a couple feet in the air but didn’t even blow a tire. While Maranatha is the chief organization helping to facilitate the building of prayer halls of the Sikhs extended extraordinary courtesies. They shut down all activities for the day; organized a program in the old chapel, where they honored us with cultural items and gifts and asked us to share the spiritual and moral values that made Vincent Hill unique so that their faculty and students could carry on the heritage of the school; and then invited us to a dinner with their faculty.

Vincent Hill School enrolled only 151 students at its maximum. With the decline in expatriate workers, it was closed in 1969 and subsequently sold to the Sikhs. End of story.

Not quite. Over the years its spirit has been kept alive by a newsletter for alumni and former faculty; now it boasts a website. And this year the idea coalesced for a reunion—on site.

The event was extraordinary. Some 75 people gathered from seven different nations on a 7,000-foot hilltop to remember a little school that closed 30 years ago. Some who came were spouses and children of alumni who wanted to figure out what was so different about this school that influenced husband, wife, or parent so greatly.

The excitement and power of the event were palpable. For me the occasion was made all the more memorable by Noelene’s joining me.

Friday afternoon we walked the long, winding, up-and-down main road of Mussoorie, stopping at stores and sights we hadn’t seen in more than 30 years. Friday evening we all gathered to reminisce, share, remember friends whose lives had ended.

For Sabbath we had planned to sit at Valehead overlooking the old school and then roam the campus. But the Sikhs extended extraordinary courtesies. They shut down all activities for the day; organized a program in the old chapel, where they honored us with cultural items and gifts and asked us to share the spiritual and moral values that made Vincent Hill unique so that their faculty and students could carry on the heritage of the school; and then invited us to a dinner with their faculty.

None of us who came back to Vincent Hill were pleased that the school was sold in 1969. For years we carried it in our hearts, grieving that it was no more. But in an utterly unexpected turn of events our coming back “home” brought a sense of fulfillment and continuity.

India has everything. Because India is a kaleidoscope of ever-changing images, no one picture captures the whole. For every statement one might make about India someone can give a rejoinder based on their observations. And both will be right.

India is new. India is old. India is hurrying into the new millennium. India is tied to agelong ways.

India is changing. India is still India. A new mood is blowing across the land. India will never change.

This trip had everything. Church leaders dreaming dreams and seeing visions. Young people fired with enthusiasm to tell others about the mighty name of Jesus that brings answers to prayer. Old workers rejoicing to see new companies of people who accept Jesus gathering in new prayer halls.


Old India hands will find my report incredible. The suggestion of this ancient land leap-frogging the landline communication system to a cellular network will boggle their minds. Someone who thinks prayer halls can be constructed from scratch in 30 to 40 days must have gone out in the midday sun, along with mad dogs and Englishmen.

I am still coming to terms with these new realities. But I remember the power of the word of the One who says: "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" (Isa. 43:18, NIV). And also this promise: "In India . . . God has in reserve a firmament of chosen ones that will yet shine forth amidst the darkness, revealing clearly to an apostate world the transforming power of obedience to His law" (Prophets and Kings, pp. 188, 189).
ADVENTIST REVIEW, JULY 8, 1999 (901) 13

ANGEL MANUEL RODRÍGUEZ

Some Adventists are interpreting the time periods mentioned in Daniel 12:5-13 literally, as future events. What is your reaction?

Some Adventists are indeed applying Daniel 12:5-13 to future events that will take place after Michael arises (verse 1). Accordingly, the prophetic periods mentioned in those verses (the 1260, 1290, and 1335 days), are taken to be literal days still in the future. Using the historicist method of interpretation, Adventists have traditionally taken the time periods to be symbols for years. Any attempt to merge futurism and historicism by introducing a double fulfillment of apocalyptic prophecies will undermine our system of prophetic interpretation. These new proposals cannot be supported from the context or from the book of Daniel. Here’s why:

1. Structure of the vision: The vision introduced in Daniel 10 covers Daniel 11:1-12:4, and ends with a conclusion, Daniel 12:5-13. The introduction consists of a conversation between Daniel and two heavenly beings. The conclusion to the vision describes the same conversation between Daniel and two heavenly beings. It is a single literary unit.

2. Location of the time periods: The time periods in Daniel’s prophecies are located at the end of the visions. In Daniel 7 the vision is described in verses 1-14; the time period is given in verse 25. The vision of Daniel 8:1-12 is followed by the time period in verse 14. This implies that the time periods in Daniel 12:5-13 are directly related to the vision in Daniel 11.

3. Daniel 7 and the 1260 days: The three and a half times/1260-day prophetic period is introduced for the first time in Daniel 7:25, in a context that is clearly symbolic. There is no reason to interpret the same prophetic period literally in chapter 12. Such an approach invalidates the year/day principle because of the lack of consistency in its application. Besides, in Daniel 12:7 the time period during which God’s enemy persecutes the “holy people” perfectly parallels Daniel 7.

4. Linguistic connections between Daniel 11 and 12: The phrase “the end of the astonishing things/wonders” (Dan. 12:6) refers back to Daniel 11:36, where the same Hebrew root, pala, is used to describe the words of the enemy spoken against God (cf. Dan. 8:24). Both passages indicate that this evil power will be successful for a period of time. Daniel 11 deals with the specific time during which this phenomenon takes place and points out that it will come to an end after the enemy breaks the power of “the holy people” (Dan. 12:7). This same event is described in Daniel 7:25 and 8:24, where the same terminology designates God’s servants. Other connections include references to “the wicked” (Dan. 11:32; 12:10), the verbs “to understand” (Dan. 11:33; 12:10), “to refine,” “to purify,” and “to make spotless” (Dan. 11:35; 12:10).

In Daniel 11:31 and 12:11 the word “daily” is used together with the verb “to abolish/remove.” They both use the phrase “the abomination that causes desolation” in conjunction with the verb “to set up.” There is no ground to argue that these two passages are dealing with different events. By using the same terminology the writer is telling us that the reference is to the same event. Therefore, the time periods mentioned in Daniel 12:11, 12 (1290 days and 1335 days) are to be applied to the events described in Daniel 11:31. Daniel 12:7 describes the time of persecution mentioned in chapter 11:32-35.

Defining the historical fulfillment of the 1290 days and the 1335 days is not difficult. First, the 1290 days are associated with the work of God’s enemy, mentioned elsewhere. Daniel 7 indicates that the control exercised by that religious/political power over God’s people came to an end in 1798. That date provides the end for the 1290 years; its starting point would then be A.D. 508, when the Franks defeated the Arian Visigoths. Second, the 1335 days are an extension of the 1290 days, thus indicating that they start at the same time. This means that the 1335 years ended in 1843/1844.


Angel Manuel Rodríguez is an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference.
On November 26, 1998, J. John Wycliffe and Dittu Abraham interviewed Ms. Kim Gangte, the first Adventist member of Parliament of the Lok Sabha (the Indian Parliament’s lower house). Following are excerpts of that interview:

Dittu Abraham: Tell us about yourself. To which tribe do you belong?
Kim: I am a Kuki. This tribe has many subgroups. I am from the Gangte subtribe.

DA: Which part of Manipur do you hail from?
I am from Churachandpur in south Manipur, a district that borders Mizoram. The Kukis and Mizos have much in common.

DA: Isn’t Churachandpur the area that has been extremely tense for some years now? Is that also your parliamentary constituency?
Yes. Insurgents have been very active in this area, but the problem does exist almost everywhere in the state. I represent the Churachandpur constituency in Parliament.

DA: Please tell us about your family and your education.
I hail from a family of farmers. My parents were evangelists to the Kukis. I attended the Adventist Training School at Jowai in Meghalaya State, India. Then I went to Gwahati University and completed a degree. I then finished a master’s degree in English at Pune University. I have always been grateful for the Adventist education I had early in life.

DA: Exactly at a time when the church and our missionaries were facing false accusations of forced conversions and of aiding terrorism, news came that you were elected to Parliament. I guess it was an answer to the prayers of all of us.
I went to Mr. L. K. Advani, the union home minister, with some of our church leaders. I told him, “You have known me for a number of years and hence you know what a nationalist-minded person I am. You know how I have been fighting for the poor and the downtrodden. If you have faith and confidence in me, then you have to have confidence in my church. This is the church in which I was brought up. I was educated in a church-run school. I know the missionaries of my denomination, that they get involved only in activities such as trying to help the poor and needy of this country.” “I know,” he agreed, and told me that he too was brought up in Christian schools. Then we asked [Southern Asia Division president] Ron Watts to pray for him. He really appreciated that gesture.

John Wycliffe: In the United States, the state and the church are two separate entities, and people fight to keep it that way. How would you maintain this principle in your work as a parliamentarian and politician while remaining loyal to the church?
My view of politics is very simple. It’s loving people, appreciating human values, honoring human rights, and serving people. My target is helping the poor and setting an example for others. It does not necessarily involve preaching from the Bible, but practically applying its instructions.

DA: From what you have said I gather that you are referring to the need for religious people in politics, people who are value-driven.
Yes. Religious people should get into politics so that politics can be kept clean. Politics today is looked upon as something dirty. But if the people who are in politics are clean, politics itself will be clean. Service for the people is the right kind of politics.
JW: So would you encourage a young Christian who is aspiring to enter politics?

Sure. Do you know why I say this? Before I ran in the election, I asked God to guide me and show me His approval by a sign. If it was His will that I should not run, I asked Him to wipe out the thought of running from my mind. I had come to the realization that I should run because I had helplessly witnessed a lot of bloodshed and human rights violations. I saw women and children suffering. I saw the poor and underprivileged oppressed. And I tried in my own little way to help them. But very often it was like banging my head against a stone wall. Sometimes I wept. Sometimes I shouted. Sometimes I got angry. I would go to my bedroom and remember how houses were burned down and innocent people chopped to pieces. I did not know what to do.

Then I went into my room. I shut the door, knelt down, and just prayed to God: “Please send someone to help us out of this chaotic situation.” I prayed and I wept, not once but a number of times. And then one day an idea came to my mind. I realized that to make a difference, we must have a representative in the policymaking group. It finally dawned on me that persuading other people to do what I want will not work. I now considered entering the election myself. But my job as a college lecturer was my life-line. I was also working as an announcer in the All-India Radio, Imphal, and as a correspondent from my state for the Eastern Panorama, a magazine in which I highlighted women and human rights issues.

It was an exceedingly tough decision. A defeat could have spelled financial ruin for me. I prayed as never before. Finally, just two months before the elections, I suddenly resigned from the college. Many people felt that I had done something really foolish. “If you are not elected, what will you do?” they asked. But deep inside I knew that God would provide for me. Then I entered the elections.

JW: Now that you have been elected, are you still close to the people?

Poor people come from 5:00 in the morning to visit me. I try to meet and help as many as I can every day.

DA: As a member of Parliament these past few months, do you see a role for the church in helping these people?

Yes. I have been stating in Parliament that one of the main reasons we have so many insurgents is unemployment. The church can play a big role by introducing some kind of vocational training—something like at Spicer Memorial College. I was so impressed with the bakery at Spicer run by students. If such programs were introduced in Manipur, we could help a lot of people become self-supporting by engaging in income-generating projects.

DA: Our church will have to invest in something like that. We may need to give loans to some and enable them to gain self-reliance.

Yes, we should help young people to get work. That way, slowly, insurgency can also be solved. We can help them and the government will appreciate our efforts.

DA: Do you have any favorite Bible characters?

Moses is my role model. I consider him the greatest politician because of his undying love for the people.

JW: Thank you, Ms. Gangte. God bless you as you “preach” through your kind deeds for the upliftment of the poor and the downtrodden.

J. John Wycliffe works in Archives and Statistics at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland, and is a Southern Asia Division committee member representing Indians living overseas. Dittu Abraham is the editor of the Southern Asia Tidings, printed in Pune, India.
Visa

A routine trip proved to be anything but.

BY CHITRA BARNABAS

Tom Carter couldn’t understand it. As director of the General Conference Trust Services he had traveled all over the world—many times. Until now he had never faced a dilemma quite like this. Carter was scheduled to travel to the Africa-Indian Ocean Division to train representatives from the division for Trust Services. Priscilla Me-tonou, director of the division Trust Services, had been working tirelessly for more than a year to arrange this meeting.

The Best-laid Plans

Carter was able to get an excellent fare for his itinerary, the only hitch being that it was a nonrefundable ticket. Carter then applied for visas. In a short while visas were granted for Zimbabwe and Zambia, but nothing came for Nigeria. Upon contacting the division office, he was informed that visas for the United States were slow in being issued. He was also informed that it would require an official invitation from the government of Nigeria for him to enter the country. The division office foresaw no problem in obtaining such an invitation.

Believing that it would be smooth sailing as far as his visa was concerned, Carter left for London. To escalate the process, he decided on having his visa papers worked on at the offices of the Nigerian High Commission in London. But this was not to be. The High Commission turned down his petition and advised him to work with its office in Washington, D.C.

Carter wondered what he should do, whom he should turn to. On an impulse he asked the British Airways office for help. He requested for them to arrange for him to fly into Accra, the capital of Ghana, so that he could travel through Benin, which is adjacent to Nigeria. Then he would be close enough to enter Nigeria when his visa was finally granted. But the airline politely informed him that they could not help him in any way because of the type of ticket he had. Other alternatives were explored, but the cost was prohibitive.

The only course seemed to be to wait in London until the invitation from the Nigerian government came through. The British Embassy apparently did not want to become involved in the matter, but they did issue a second passport so as to enable him to send the original one to the Nigerian Embassy in Washington, D.C.

Carter waited for more than a week in London. But nothing came through—no invitation from the Nigerian government, and no visa. To top it all, he received word from the Eastern Africa Division that the meetings there might be postponed.

Baffled, Carter pondered why he had faced one roadblock after another regarding his travel to Nigeria. In 17 years of traveling for the General Conference this would be the first time that he would be unable to complete a planned itinerary. The previous year he had set out for meetings in China without a visa and had been able to procure one in Hong Kong. But this time nothing seemed to work.

The Master’s Plan

Carter remembers sitting in his hotel room that Saturday night mulling over the impasse he was facing. It suddenly dawned on him that the only viable option would be for
him to return to Washington, D.C. Things became still clearer to him when his wife, Janette, called later that evening.

The news Janette conveyed to him changed the entire course of his life. She informed him that his doctor had called, stating that biopsies performed on him before he left for London were positive. They showed that he had cancer. Carter couldn’t believe what he was hearing. Routine X-rays earlier that year showed no trace of cancer. He began to see the Lord’s hand in his dilemma. He realized now that there was a reason that his visa to Nigeria and the invitation from the Nigerian government had not worked out. He rushed back to the United States for his surgery. Suddenly it dawned on him that “some of God’s greatest gifts are unanswered prayers.”

Carter underwent surgery on April 28, nearly two months after he left for London. The surgery was successful, and the pathology report indicated that the cancer had not spread. After two three-month checkups Carter was told that he need not return for a checkup for a whole year. The doctors informed him that they consider him one of their success stories.

Carter in no way feels that he was favored by the Lord above others; in fact, he wonders at times why his life was preserved when four of his close friends succumbed to the disease within three months of his surgery.

What Carter does believe is that the Lord portrayed His love for him through this perplexing experience; that God stood by him and taught him to trust in spite of any outcome or consequence.

Carter readily cites one of his favorite passages in the book Steps to Christ: “We can so far comprehend His dealings with us, and the motives by which He is actuated, that we may discern boundless love and mercy united to infinite power. We can understand as much of His purposes as it is for our good to know; and beyond this we must still trust the hand that is omnipotent, the heart that is full of love” (p. 106).

Tom Carter now understands why the visa never came.

* Garth Brooks, Pat Alger, and Larry Bastian, Unanswered Prayers.
A DRA/Zambia Preparing for Congolese Refugees

BY BETH SCHAEFER, Adventist Development and Relief Agency News and Information Officer

While the world’s eyes are focused on the tragic situation of Kosovar refugees, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (A DRA), which is active in Albania and the former Yugoslavia, has also started making plans to ease the plight of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

A DRA is prepared to manage a transit refugee camp for registration and a temporary housing site for 50,000 to 100,000 refugees entering Zambia, reports Ron Ringrose, A DRA/Zambia director. A DRA officials recently met with the government of Zambia, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and other participating nongovernmental organizations to prepare final contingency plans.

“Since March 4, 27,000 Congolese refugees have entered Zambia’s northern region to flee ongoing political insecurity,” explains Ringrose. He adds, “The current daily influx of refugees into Zambia is approximately 150.” It is estimated that as many as 200,000 more refugees will cross the border seeking safety.

The transit camp that A DRA/Zambia is preparing for the entering refugees is in Nchelenge, approximately 25 miles (40 kilometers) south of Pweto on the shores of Lake Mweru. “This camp will be the refugees’ first contact point and will be a collection area for registration as the refugees wait for transport to Kala, about 100 miles [160 kilometers] away,” Ringrose says. The refugee camp at Kala, near Kawambwa, will cater to these same refugees. It is expected that as many as 100,000 refugees will flee to this area.

A DRA/Zambia is currently part-running,” says Tom Ngenda, A DRA/Zambia planner. “The agricultural institute is the most established institution located between the two camps to hold the supplies.”

The institute was established in 1992 with funding from A DRA/South Pacific Division and the Australian Agency for International Development to decrease malnutrition and poverty in an area that had 7,000 residents. “Approximately 22 percent of the refugees who have entered through the northern border near Kaputa are unaccompanied children and child soldiers,” reports Ringrose. “A DRA and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) are currently looking for a person who can care for these children, to provide the counseling, special care, and education they will need.”

Among the other organizations participating in the relief distribution to the refugee camps are UNHCR, UNICEF, World Food Program, Red Cross, and CARE. Other projects A DRA/Zambia is running include a US$1 million, three-year child-sur- survival project in the Chipata and Chadiza districts, a three-year child and primary health project in the Nyimba District, a family planning and anti-AIDS project in Kabwe, and an agriculture training support project in Chimpenbe. A DRA/Zambia is also completing a US$1 million relief food project, monitoring and organizing the delivery of 3,500 tons (3.175 metric tons) of grain in drought- and flood-affected areas of Zambia.
Adventist Health Managed Care Signs Affiliation Agreement in Taiwan

BY RAY DABROWSKI, DIRECTOR OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT

A new era in Adventist health care has started in Taiwan with the signing of an affiliation agreement between Adventist Health Managed Care and the three Adventist hospitals in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

The affiliation, formalized in ceremonies on April 28 and May 2, will try to meet the needs of the hospitals in the areas of information systems experience sharing, managed-care contract review services, recruitment services, physician visitation, medical symposium, network patient referrals, telemedicine, and training.

"Many companies and organizations recognize how important globalization is," said James Wu, vice president of Taiwan Adventist Hospital and spokesman for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Taiwan. "By signing this agreement, we are in step with the present opportunities."

"This new opportunity improves our reputation even further," said Wu. Presently the three hospitals in the South China Island Union belong to Adventist Health Care Asia (AHCA) under the jurisdiction of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division. AHCA members include Tokyo and Kobe Adventist hospitals in Japan, Adventist Medical Center in Okinawa, and Pusan Adventist Hospital in Korea. The three hospitals in the South China Island Union (Hong Kong and Taiwan) are Hongkong Adventist Hospital, Tsuen Wan Adventist Hospital, and Taiwan Adventist Hospital.

The Adventist Health Managed Care will provide a patient referral coordinator and service to facilitate medical referral to Loma Linda University Medical Center, White Memorial Medical Center, Glendale Adventist Medical Center, and Castle Medical Center in the United States. The affiliates will continue to acknowledge the importance of maintenance and enhancement of the quality image of Seventh-day Adventist health care across the Pacific.

The Adventist Church’s care system is worldwide, with 161 hospitals. This affiliation agreement inaugurates a new dimension of Adventist global outreach in health care.—Adventist News Network.

Alleged Vatican Document a Hoax

Many Adventists have seen a document that describes 10 ways in which the Roman Catholic Church will evangelize Seventh-day Adventists. The document is purportedly from the Vatican. The following statement was issued by the North American Division to church leaders to help them respond to questions on the issues.

A disinformation campaign has reached many Seventh-day Adventist members. A disinformation campaign is one that presents false information to distract or disturb a group of people. In this case, the message is purportedly a document from the Vatican. The fake document describes ways to reach the most desirable sectarian group, referring to the Adventist Church.

The methods of evangelizing Seventh-day Adventists include: To make concessions that would bring Catholic thinking into Adventism, to question the biblical basis for Adventist doctrines and for Ellen White, to show the danger to world peace of Adventist positions about the pope and the Sabbath, to reveal how Adventist leaders have taken ecumenical steps toward the Catholic Church, and to warn Adventists that they will be blamed for world evils if they do not unite with Catholics and Protestants.

The document is a hoax.

The North American Division has received information about the document from many separate and totally independent sources, and none of the sources agree on how the document came to be. In one iteration the document was discovered in Honduras. In another iteration it was discovered on a website. Both of those sources said the document was originally in Spanish and was translated into English. In a third iteration the document started out in English. The versions of the document also differ from each other slightly.

The Inter-American Division has had the greatest flurry of information about the document. The leadership of Inter-Amerca agrees with us that it is not a valid document from the Vatican. The Inter-Amerca leadership feels that the document may be part of a campaign to discredit the Adventist Church, especially in Inter-Amerca, where many Roman Catholic members have joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The document appeared on one website that had an official link with the Inter-American Division’s website. When Inter-Amerca asked that the link be severed, an additional article was posted that described Adventist history and the Adventist position “against” Catholics.

For now we can say with clarity that the document is not what it purports to be, but the campaign of
Forgive Us Our Debts

BY STEPHEN CHAVEZ, ASSISTANT EDITOR, ADVENTIST REVIEW

With the year 2000 less than six months away, an increasing number of government, religious, and entertainment personalities are joining together in an unusual coalition to urge debt relief for 33 of the world’s poorest countries.

A spokesperson for the Jubilee 2000 Coalition, speaking during the Group of Eight summit in Cologne, Germany, recently said that the 52 poorest nations in the world owe debts of $370 billion. Leading industrial countries agreed to lower the debt by as much as $100 billion.

Interestingly, part of the momentum for the debt relief movement comes from the biblical concept of the jubilee, in which debts were supposed to be canceled every 50 years. There’s no evidence that the jubilee was ever observed in the Bible times or since, but with the year 2000 looming, maybe this is a good time to give it a try.

Who would be affected? The governments and corporations (that is, the taxpayers and stockholders) of the largest and richest industrialized nations would have to pick up the tab. But in all likelihood, the bottom line wouldn’t be affected very much. The governments and industries of the smallest (in terms of gross national product) and poorest countries would, perhaps, be able to meet their remaining loan obligations. And citizens of these poor nations may have their standard of living raised just a bit.

But there’s also the real risk that the ones who would benefit most from debt reduction would be corrupt and unscrupulous political and business leaders in poor, undemocratic, and underdeveloped countries. There’s a real possibility that wasteful and ill-advised business practices will put these countries back in debt in a few years.

But if debt reduction can give poor nations a chance to start over, shouldn’t it be tried? Isn’t that what forgiveness is all about?

WORLD NEWS & PERSPECTIVES

NEWS BREAK

Romania Denies Religious Freedom to Students

Romania’s Ministry of National Education has denied religious freedom to students who could not take an exam on Sabbath, June 5.

According to Viorel Dima, general secretary of the country’s National Association for Religious Liberty, the education ministry is opposed to any suggestion that would allow students to take the Capacity Examination on any other day. The exam is an entrance requirement for any high school or vocational school.

“We observe that the Ministry of National Education remains inflexible in its position, in spite of official recommendations coming from the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs, the Romanian Presidency, the Romanian Senate Commission for Education, the president of the Romanian Senate, and the president of Romania,” Dima commented.

Some 1,000 Adventists were affected, and the church has been trying to arrange a rescheduling of the exam in September. The education ministry refuses any date changes, saying that “due to the fact that the Capacity Examination is a national examination, to change now the examination days for a certain category of students would disturb it and would create suspicions. . . . To observe all the religious festivals when scheduling the exams would create serious perturbations of the system.”

In a May 27 meeting with Dima and Adrian Bocaneanu (president of the Adventist Church in Romania), the minister of education explained the ministry’s opposition to any date changes by saying that this is a national examination and it is impossible to make exceptions for any reason.

The Adventist Church in Romania continues to appeal this decision. If the direct appeal is unsuccessful, the church intends to seek judicial remedies.—Adventist News Network.

Brazilian Adventists Warn of Smoking Hazards in Public March

Approximately 1,000 individuals participated in the walk in honor of the Worldwide Day Against Smoking, created by the World Health Organization, on May 29 in Florianopolis, Santa Catarina, Brazil. The walk took place on Saturday, a more favorable day to mobilize volunteers.

In addition to alerting the public to the dangers of
Test Your Global Mission IQ

1. When civil war erupted in the land of the White Nile, 10,000 refugees fled south to Nimule on the border with Uganda. A Global Mission pioneer has worked there for three years. Through a miracle Martin Tako Abea was able to learn the local Arabic dialect in a week. Among the 60 who now worship together, three come from a tribe never before reached by the Aventist message. What African country is this?
   A. Central African Republic   C. Sudan
   B. Kenya                     D. Egypt

2. Six people baptized on the formerly unentered Isle of Wight made Global Mission history for the Trans-European Division. Seven times larger than Bermuda, this island nation is situated not far from the cities of Southampton and Portsmouth. Of what country are these members citizens?
   A. Denmark                   C. Iceland
   B. United Kingdom             D. Ireland

3. The Adventist Media Centre-Middle East will benefit from the new $15 million shortwave radio station to be built in Argenta, Italy. Its Arabic and Farsi programs will draw more correspondence school mail to its headquarters in Nicosia on a politically partitioned island nation in the eastern Mediterranean with a Greek and Turkish population. What nation is this?
   A. Cyprus                    C. Malta
   B. Rhodes                    D. Crete

Answers:
1. C. Sudan. This ethnically divided nation of 28 million lives south of Egypt. Church membership (6,900) has increased 331 percent in 10 years.
2. B. United Kingdom. These new members of the South England Conference join 19,000 in the British Union Conference.
3. A. Cyprus is the headquarters of the Middle East Union of the Trans-European Division. The center learned that a letter from Egypt cost the equivalent of 20 loaves of bread; from Iraq, 150 liters of petrol. So the center buys stamps locally and encloses them with return mail.

Compiled by the Global Mission Office of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

WORLD NEWS & PERSPECTIVES

cigarettes, participants also invited smokers to attend a stop-smoking course from May 31 through June 4.

During the walk there was a parade with floats that demonstrated the consequences of the smoking habit. A sound system denounced the use of cigarettes and presented smoking-related statistics.

The participants, mostly Pathfinders from Greater Florianopolis and students from the Seventh-day Adventist schools, carried banners and posters, and distributed pamphlets warning of the dangers of smoking.

At the end of the march the Vivace Choir from the Central Seventh-day Adventist Church in Florianopolis presented several songs. Former smokers also told of their experiences in giving up cigarettes. The Santa Catarina Conference Health Department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church organized the march.

Countdown to Showdown Winds Down

The Countdown to Showdown evangelistic series in Tottenham, London, England, ended May 29 with more than 30 baptisms, reports the British Union Conference. A nother 15 persons are being prepared for baptism.

The four-week tent revival drew between 400 and 500 attendees to the weekday meetings and more than 1,000 persons on Sabbaths. Thirteen area churches participated in the meetings. The featured evangelists were Michael Hamilton and Stephen McKenzie.

Middle East Union Reports New Growth

Middle East Union officials report 333 baptisms in the first quarter of 1999, almost as many baptisms as for all of 1998 (340). Union membership was 9,320 on December 31, 1998.

Evangelistic efforts are being planned for the entire union territory, says Roland Fidelia, union communication director. The NeXt Millennium seminar (NET ’98) videos featuring Pastor Dwight Nelson are being translated into Arabic and shown throughout the territory.

What’s Upcoming

July 3   Vacation Witnessing emphasis
July 17  Home Study International Promotion
Aug. 7   Global Mission Evangelism
Sept. 4  Lay Evangelism emphasis
Sept. 11 Aventist Review emphasis
Sept. 18 Family Togetherness Day

NEWSBREAK
OUR CANDIDATE IS WINNING!

What I learned out on the stumps

BY RACHEL E. WHITAKER

SINCE I'VE ALWAYS BEEN INTERESTED IN politics, I spent a summer working on the reelection campaign of my United States representative (whom I'll call Fred Brown). Despite glamorous moments—such as photo opportunities with high-level government officials—the intense deadline pressure and the acrimonious partisan debates discouraged me from pursuing a career in the fast-paced world of election politics. Nonetheless, I noticed some interesting parallels between my job and the Christian life.

God, too, has a cause to promote: the redemption of our planet. He wants as many people as possible to choose Him as the ruler of their lives, and He has enlisted us to tell the world about His principles of governing. I can think of at least four ways that working for God is like working on a political campaign:

1. We have to be sold on our candidate.

It's very difficult to promote a person or a cause you don't believe in. This is especially true in a campaign, where all issues are polarized. Everything your candidate does and says is automatically good; the opponents' opinions and actions are automatically bad, or at least suspect. Since I'm the kind of person who likes to look at both sides of a topic and avoid taking dogmatic positions, the unquestioning loyalty of some of my coworkers made me uncomfortable. Fortunately, I agreed with most of Congressman Brown's views and appreciated his approach to government. Working for a candidate I didn't support would have been almost intolerable.

The same dichotomy exists in the great controversy, where one candidate is challenging the other for the government of the universe. We must be wholeheartedly on one side or the other. The ballot of life has no spot for an "Undecided" vote. Jesus said, "He who is not with me is against me" (Matt. 12:30), and "Whoever is not against us is for us" (Mark 9:40).

There are only two choices. If we waver back and forth, hoping to have the best of both parties' proposals, we will find ourselves on the losing side in the end. Fortunately, God has a program we can support with confidence. His policies have never failed!

2. We have to give the job our all.

My plan at the beginning of my summer job was to work four days a week so I could have some time off. I soon learned that there is no such thing as working part-time on a political campaign. By the end of the summer I was working more than 40 hours a week, plus Sundays and holidays. On American Independence Day I marched in two small-town parades to represent Congressman Brown. I spent one Sunday delivering yard signs to supporters and another passing out campaign flyers. On the night before our biggest fund-raising dinner I worked until 1:30 a.m. to finish preparations. So much for having extra free time!

Similarly, when we commit ourselves to God's service, we can't keep anything back for ourselves. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength," Jesus...
commanded (Mark 12:30). We give a tithe of our money, and one day of our time is especially consecrated to God. But our whole lives must be dedicated to Him as well. We can’t serve God on Sabbath and ourselves the rest of the week. All our time, abilities, and resources are His, to be used as He directs. There are no part-time jobs on God’s campaign staff.

3. Our boss hasn’t left us to do the work alone.

Since Congressman Brown spent most of his time in Washington, D.C., fulfilling his duties as a representative, he was rarely around to direct his campaign staff. Fortunately, his absence did not severely hamper the campaign effort, because his chief of staff (I’ll call her Susan Thomas) worked in his district office just a few doors away from the campaign headquarters. Thomas had known Fred Brown since she was a high school student volunteering on his first campaign for the state House of Representatives. After working for him for many years, she could almost read Congressman Brown’s mind. If we wanted to know what the congressman thought on an issue or how he would want an event organized, all we had to do was ask Thomas. She even knew the words and phrases he liked to use in his campaign materials!

God, too, it might seem, has left His workers on earth to run His campaign on their own. But we are not really alone. Before He went back to heaven, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would be with us as His representative, giving us the power and the knowledge we need to finish God’s work. The Spirit is the ideal Counselor; He “knows the thoughts of God” (1 Cor. 2:11). Like Thomas, “He will not speak on His own . . . He will bring glory to me [Christ] by taking from what is mine and making it known to you” (John 16:13, 14). Moreover, Jesus promised that the Spirit would influence the world to cast their votes on God’s side (John 16:8-11). With the Spirit of God as our adviser, our effort is sure to succeed.

4. We don’t need to worry about the outcome.

Congressman Brown had been popular during his previous terms in office and had many supporters in his district. Because his opponents were clearly at a disadvantage, none of Congressman Brown’s campaign staffers were very worried that we would lose the election. This feeling of assurance made the job far more enjoyable; campaigns are stressful enough without the fear that all those months of work might prove futile in the final showdown. We did little nail-biting as we listened to radio reports of voting results on election night. We were confident that our candidate would come out ahead. And he did!

It’s the same with us as Christians. Although the entire world may seem to be against us, we don’t need to worry about the future, because we know what the outcome will be. Jesus has already defeated His opponent. Our side has already won! When the poll results look dismal, Jesus says, “Take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). The enemy’s mudslinging tactics can’t change the results in God’s campaign to save humanity. When all the returns come in, we will find that our hard work has not been in vain; our candidate will come out ahead in the end.

* All Scripture references in this article are from the New International Version.

Rachel E. Whitaker lives in Charlotte, Michigan, and works as a proofreader. She enjoys writing in her spare time.
The Other Adventist School System

Home Study International/Griggs University
Celebrate 90 Years

BY BILL KNOTT

At age 80 the elderly schoolteacher was in poor health, worn out by “compassion fatigue.” For decades she had served her community and her church, challenging thousands of young minds with discipline, wit, and the latest teaching methods. Hundreds rose to call her “blessed,” but many feared she wouldn’t survive another decade. Her pulse was weak, and, to make matters even worse, she was in dire financial straits, unable to meet many basic expenses.

“It was a difficult time,” says Joseph Gurubatham, president of Home Study International, about the 80-year-old Adventist “schoolteacher” he came to work with in 1989. After decades of spirited service to the Adventist Church and the community, HSI seemed headed for a diminished role that year as newer, more flexible programs rapidly answered the pleas of parents for creative home-based education.

The reorganization launched in 1989 succeeded in arresting HSI’s decline, however. To the wonderment of all, the elderly “schoolteacher” has not only survived but even thrived, arriving at her ninetieth birthday this summer with renewed energy and vigor, an international focus, and a curriculum increasingly adapted to an online age.

Long regarded as the “other” Adventist school system, Home Study International has filled a specialized educational niche for many Adventist families since it was founded in 1909 by one of the church’s leading educators, Professor Frederick Griggs. Originally serving many isolated church families and the church’s missionary population, HSI grew through the work of gifted administrators to become a vital part of the church’s worldwide education program. Always careful not to be seen as competing with established Adventist elementary schools, academies, and colleges, HSI helped tens of thousands of families achieve educational goals through correspondence education, guided independent study, and distance learning who might otherwise never have had access to a Christian and values-based curriculum.

Hundreds of students who don’t live close enough to attend Adventist schools still depend on HSI and its range of services to finish either entire grade levels in K-12 education or to supplement other home-schooling programs.

“From its very beginnings HSI has consistently reminded students and families that correspondence education can never fully replace the impact of a strong Christian teacher in a classroom,” Gurubatham says. “We regularly ask potential clients, ‘Have you looked at your local Adventist elementary or secondary school?’ But in the absence of that option, we can offer top-quality resources that help families reach their special educational goals.”

“Many factors influence parents to look at home schooling and to HSI,” he continues. “Increasingly, there seems to be a perception, especially in North America, that public schools may no longer be safe—not morally safe, and sometimes, not even physically safe. Some parents are also convicted that they should be the primary teachers of their children. They believe that the most successful way to communicate their values to their kids is to have an additional six to seven hours a day of contact time.”

“We’re also in an era that increasingly focuses on individ-
ualizing education to meet the unique needs of each student, from the academically challenged to the academically gifted," Gurubatham adds. "Parents want their children to be treated as persons, not as products on a conveyor belt. Home Study International has found ways to help parents meet that important goal inside a nationally accredited program."

The 1990s haven't been without challenges for HSI, though. Explosive growth in Christian home-schooling alternatives has brought vigorous competitors into the market, causing HSI to reevaluate its curriculum, adapt to new technologies, and keep prices for its products at a minimum.

"There was a perception several years ago that our prices for home-schooling materials and tuition were too high as compared to what was available from other programs," Gurubatham says. "As one of the oldest, if not the oldest, Christian distance-education programs, we know that we have to provide a superior product at prices people will actually pay. That's why we've worked hard to keep our tuition and materials prices affordable during the past four years."

"We're now advertising in more than 100 publications, including home-schooling journals, magazines catering to Christian colleges, and parenting journals. As a direct result, inquiries about our program have been rapidly climbing."

Two innovative programs offered by Home Study International have also succeeded in enriching the church's K-12 program. The APLE (Alternative Programs for Learning Enrichment) has provided small Adventist elementary schools and junior and senior academies supplemental teaching materials and support for more than a decade, giving many Adventist schools critical support while they grow into full-fledged educational institutions.

HSI is also experimenting with Web-based distance education at the high school level. This program has already been pilot-tested in three public school districts in Maryland and Virginia, where administrators have been enthusiastic about the new service.

The rapid internationalization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church since the 1960s has also created new challenges and opportunities for HSI. Conversations with the church's world leaders a decade ago resulted in the 1990 creation of Griggs University, an accredited, degree-granting institution.

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The More You Know

Last week at the grocery store I watched a little boy and his big sister play a game while they followed their mom around the store. Right away I could tell the boy was just learning to read.

“What does that say?” his sister asked as she pointed to one of the banners hanging from the ceiling.

“Cost Cutter Days,” said the boy.

“Good!” his sister squealed. She took a box off a shelf and handed it to him.

“What does this say?” she asked as she pointed to two words.

The boy took the box. “Fa . . . fa . . . fa-seal . . .”

“Facial,” his sister corrected. “Facial tissue. That’s OK. Those were hard ones. What about this?” She took something else out of the grocery cart and handed it to her brother.

They played this game the whole time I followed them down the aisles of the grocery store. Most of the time the boy got the words right. But when he came across a word he didn’t know, such as “facial,” he looked at it again and repeated it to himself several times. He studied it to make sure he would know it the next time he saw it. A few minutes later his mom asked him to go back an aisle and pick up something she had missed. Because he could read, he was able to get her just what she asked for.

Anastasia just finished first grade, and she knows a few things about studying. Reading homework and spelling sentences weren’t as much fun as playing a game in the grocery store, but all that studying has made a reader out of her, too. Now she can keep her little brother, Parker, busy by reading to him, especially in the car. She shows Parker what different words look like and now he knows some of them also. Anastasia helps Parker check for e-mail from their grandmother, reads the letters to him, and then sits with him at the computer and helps him type messages back. It gives their mom time to make supper and do other things at home.

Every time Anastasia uses what she has learned to keep Parker busy for a while, she’s serving God by helping her mom. Last year she helped some by playing with Parker. But now that she has learned to read she has more ways of keeping him busy. Now she’s an even bigger help.

The Bible says, “How much better to get wisdom than gold, to choose understanding rather than silver!” (Prov. 16:16, NIV). That’s because the more you know, the more you will be able to help others. Your studying will help you serve better in God’s family.

Family Time

☛ With your family’s help, make an acrostic out of the word STUDY. Use each letter to start a word that describes something someone in your family knows how to do that can be used to serve others. (Example: S = sing)

- Help your family members know what they do best. Sit in a circle, and have each person name something that the person on their right knows a lot about or does really well. After you’ve gone around the circle once, switch directions and try it again.

- How can you use the things you just named to serve others? How can those skills help God’s family? (Hint: Even learning a new song can be used to encourage someone.)

- Read a Bible story in Acts 2:42-47 about how God’s family served each other. What did those believers need to know or be able to do to serve each other like that? How could you have served if you had been there?

- Ask the adults in your family the most important thing they’ve learned. Why? How have they used this to help God’s family? What do they wish they knew or could do to serve others better?

- Make up a song to thank Jesus for the mind He gave you. When you pray, thank Him that you can learn new things.
I respect Ellen White, but I have noticed that people seem to be able to find something in her writings to support whatever position they wish. This is especially true with respect to the subject of the nature of Christ. Are these real contradictions and if so do they not diminish Ellen White as a prophet?

There are, in Ellen White's writings, statements that are seemingly contradictory. An example with respect to the topic you mention is: "His human nature was created...It was human, identical with our own" (Selected Messages, book 3, p. 129) versus, "Let every human being be warned from the ground of making Christ altogether human, such as ourselves" (The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1129).

What are we to make of these and other such seemingly clashing points of view or emphasis?

I conclude that since Ellen White, for the most part, wrote without conscious need to clarify her statements of prior decades, it is not surprising that apparent discrepancies occasionally occur within her voluminous record of speeches, letters, articles, and books. I further conclude that in such instances her enduring position is best derived and in some cases only derived by a comparative weighing of her total counsel on the issue under consideration. Accepting the view of the vastly superior number of mentionings is logically preferable to deciding in favor of positions based upon isolated or singular quotes requiring tortuous exegesis.

Furthermore, since Ellen White neither claimed nor achieved inerrancy and since she did mature spiritually over the decades of her ministry, and since even in Scripture there are verses that speak differently (i.e., Matt. 27:44 and Luke 23:39-43), and since in no case do these occurrences oppose essential truth, they do not lessen her impact or authenticity.

Finally, it is helpful to remember that Ellen White's views on faith and doctrine are not the first word: the Bible is. Nor are they the last word: continued revelation in the church guarantees that. Diligently studied, however, they are a clear and potent word and demand not only our solemn respect but our aggressive investigation and wholehearted acceptance.

I have always believed in the Second Coming, but I am resigned to the fact that Christ may not actually come in my day. My problem is that I don't know what to tell coworkers and acquaintances who insist that such thoughts are nothing but fictitious dreams. Do I argue with them or simply ignore their snide and cynical remarks?

You should, in my opinion, confess to your doubting friends that you do not know that Jesus is coming in your lifetime—because you don't. What you do know is that the signs of the times foretell His soon return. Soon, however, is relative to both God's estimate of time as well as the completion of all the signs, at least two of which are yet to come—the gospel into all the world and the full outpouring of the latter rain upon the church.

What we Christians have is not verifiable knowledge. We have faith, and we have hope: faith in the immutable counsels and unfulfilling prophecies of God's Word and, because of that, hope that He will return in our day.

Of course, while we cannot prove the Second Coming, we have voluminous evidence in nature, the fulfillment of other prophecies, the harmony of Scripture, and the habit-changing influences of the Bible upon lives (including one's own) to cite as substantiation for our hope.

But if all that fails to convince your friends, tell them that hope in the Second Coming has given uncommon focus and happiness to your life and tell them that its corollary teachings—i.e., the Sabbath, tithing, health reform—have brought you immeasurable blessings, one of which is longevity itself (six to eight years for the average Adventist, according to Loma Linda University studies). Then let them know that you would rather live with an endless hope than die with a hopeless end and that if this is dreaming, then may you dream on.

Calvin B. Rock is a general vice president of the General Conference. He holds doctoral degrees in Ministry and Christian ethics.
striding through the sunlit forest on his way to visit a favorite Christian congregation, Pastor T was still caught up in the excitement of his new understanding of the Bible and the joy of his recent baptism into the Adventist Church— as a result of listening to programs broadcast in his language on Adventist World Radio (AWR).

The baptism itself was a miracle. In his country in Asia, where a public baptism in a large city would have brought down the wrath of government authorities, Pastor T’s baptism was public. A picnic organized at the beach with food, games, and swimming was the venue for his baptism along with many others. One by one, each person swam up to Pastor L, the speaker on the AWR broadcast, and he baptized them there in the wind and waves and sun, in plain view of anyone watching—if they were watching closely.

Months before, Pastor T had heard the Voice of Hope on AWR. At that time he was a leader in a Sundaykeeping denomination. Amazed at the message he heard, he began to study his Bible as he listened, and soon became convinced about the seventh-day Sabbath.

After his baptism Pastor T had the opportunity to travel to a neighboring country for a lay-training program conducted by Pastor L. At the end of the training Pastor T willingly took the assignment to supervise Adventist work in a district in the southern part of his country. He visited some of the congregations that he had formerly visited for the other denomination, and he worked to organize Sabbathkeeping house churches.

His stride slowed as he left the forest and approached the next village. He asked himself how he would share his new faith with these church members. Would they accept? Would they reject him completely? He decided that the best course to follow was careful, prayerful Bible study, to bring the members to a fuller understanding of the Bible, and to introduce them to the Sabbath of the Lord.

He was delighted at the warm reception. The people said they had missed him and had wondered where he had been. They had asked the denominational leaders where he was, but they had only replied, “He went to work in the north,” and did not reveal that he had become an Adventist. A time of happy fellowship with old friends ensued.

That evening, as they studied the Bible, the leader of the group said, “After you left, the leaders of our church came to us to encourage us in the faith. They gave us a radio and told us to listen only to a certain Christian broadcast. Then one night we accidentally tuned to the Voice of Hope program from the Adventist Church. We like that program so much. Everyone now listens to it, and we have learned about the seventh-day Sabbath. Do you know anything about it?”

With joy lighting his face, Pastor T said that he did know about the Voice of Hope. He told them he had become a Sabbathkeeper, a Seventh-day Adventist, and he was delighted to share his new discoveries with them. Full of extra excitement now, the group studied and talked through the night. The next day was Sabbath, and they worshiped together. The whole group of 18 families accepted the faith. Today more than 100 people now worship on Sabbath in that village.

*Names used in this article are pseudonyms. AWR broadcasts to many places where, for political or religious liberty reasons, it would be difficult or dangerous for believers and program producers if their names and locations were known.

Andrea Steele is director of public relations and listener services for Adventist World Radio.
They Still Go

Adventist Volunteer Service

The following persons left their homes in 1998 to volunteer their time to assist in mission work in other countries for short-term service. Most of them have returned home, but because of limited space and other delays, their names are just being published. We want them to know how much we appreciate their ministry.

Neil Stewart Brantley, to serve as English language teacher, Montemorelos University, Nuevo Leon, Mexico, of Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Kenneth Scott Brown, to serve as education teacher, Pakistan Adventist Seminary, Punjab, Pakistan, and Marion Hazel Brown, of Yuccaipa, California.

Lucy Aimee Caesar, to serve as teacher, Seychelles Mission, Seychelles, Indian Ocean, of Miami, Florida.

Forrest Alan Davis, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Gonzaga, Virginia.

Everton George Dawkins, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Miami, Florida.

Michael and Jamie Delay, to serve as elementary teachers, Ekamal International School, Bangkok, Thailand, of Collegeville, Pennsylvania.

Carolyn Patricia Douglas, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Japan English Schools, Yokohama, Japan, of Garland, Texas.

Briggett Michelle Dunn, to serve as elementary teacher, Ekamal International School, Bangkok, Thailand, of Arden, North Carolina.

Esther Jemina Edwards, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Brooklyn, New York.

Raymond C. Gager II, to serve as teacher/evangelist, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Berrien Springs, Michigan.

William Edward Haworth, to serve as teacher/technical advisor, Davis Indian Industrial College, Paruima Village, Guyana, of Vernon, Alabama.

Tosco-Gabriella Henry, to serve as English/Bible teacher, San Yu English Bible Center, Pintung City, Taiwan, of Collegedale, Tennessee.

Clarence Eugene Hodges, Jr., to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Maitre, Louisiana.

Denise Remen, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Centers, Goliombo, Russia, of Oconto Falls, Wisconsin.

Dos Santos, to serve as assistant food controller, A DRA/Bolivia, La Paz, Bolivia, of Riverside, California.

Annie Eun Myung Sohn, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Redmond, Washington.

Tanya Marie Spilovoy, to serve as English language teacher, San Yu International Language Institute, China, of Bismarck, North Dakota.

David Alan Wedel, to serve as English language teacher, Euro-Asia Division, Moscow, Russia, of Colton, California.

Lloyd Dean Wenzel, to serve as dentist, Guam SDA Clinic, Tamuning, Guam, and Sharon Joyce Wenzel, of Montrose, Colorado.

Kimberly Kay Widden, to serve as English/Science teacher, Guam A dventist Academy, Talofoto, Guam, of Walla Walla, Washington.

David Andrew Zabaleta, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of W hite Plains, New York.

Regular Missionary Service

The following persons left for regular missionary service in 1998. Please remember them in your prayers.

Douglas Clayville, returning to serve as associate secretary, Southern Asia-Pacific Division, Silang, Cavite, Philippines, Susan Clayville, and three children.

Launda Rene Forsey, returning to serve as English teacher, Maxwell A dventist Academy, Nairobi, Kenya, East Africa, David Forsey, and two children.
I was in Korea teaching English conversation and Bible. One day I received notification that a package from the United States had arrived. I knew my way to the post office (I’d been in Korea about eight months), so I headed out to fetch my treasure. Soon I was standing in line anticipating the familiar routine—wait, hand your notice to the clerk, who gave your package to the customs inspector, who opened the package to approve the contents. If there was a fee, you paid the clerk.

Mom had remembered my favorite dessert, Reese’s Peanut Butter Eggs! My mouth began to water. Then I watched the inspector smash the eggs one by one to make sure they didn’t conceal anything. The now-damaged box made its way to the clerk, who looked at me and said in Korean, “That will be $7.50, Korean money.” I was furious. What began as Mom’s thoughtfulness had turned into destruction and high-way robbery.

Assessing the situation, I played the dumb American, not understanding Korean. “What?” I said loudly in English. “Can’t you give me my box that’s already messed up?” The clerk didn’t understand.

“May I help?” a smiling Korean businessman behind me asked politely, in perfect English. The last thing I wanted was someone to translate while I tried to evade paying for the smashed box.

“Yes! These people opened my box of candy, smashed half of it, and now they want me to pay. They ought to give it to me, since they damaged it,” I replied.

The businessman spoke to the clerk in Korean. Turning to me, he said, “You’ll need to pay the customs fee anyway.”

“What? What if I walked away and left them with the smashed candy?”

“You’ll need to pay the customs fee anyway. That’s the law.” His kind voice frustrated me.

“What a stupid law!”

Looking into my eyes, he asked, “Are you here on missionary work?”

I wished a hole would open and swallow me. Yes, I was there to teach about Jesus and show how to live the Christ-centered life. And here I was selling my witness for $7.50 and a box of smashed candy.

How had he known? He saw right through my heart. My messed-up priorities were on public view to the people in line. The apostle Peter denied Jesus too, but only when it was life-threatening. I had done it for candy and far less than 30 pieces of silver.

Without answering, I paid the clerk, took my box, and headed home. I tried a candy, but it tasted rotten. Was it because it was smashed or because my grand ambition of coming to Korea to witness for Jesus had been found to be not so grand?

I knew how Peter felt after he denied Jesus when he looked into His eyes and saw only pity and forgiveness. That day I cried tears of repentance. I saw myself as I really was, and it wasn’t a beautiful sight. But that day I also found forgiveness and cleansing in my Saviour’s arms.

My last four months in Korea were more productive than my first eight. I think one reason was that humiliating experience in a post office, and the mercy of God in spite of it all.

I’m thankful God doesn’t call just the righteous to be His ambassadors. He calls us in spite of ourselves, not because of ourselves. He calls us so we can tell others what a wonderful, caring, forgiving Friend we have in Jesus.

“Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards. . . . But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: ‘Let him who boasts boast in the Lord’” (1 Cor. 1:26-31, NIV). ■

Dan Serns was a student missionary in Korea. He currently pastors two churches in Kansas City, Kansas.