This World Is My Home

Adventist Disinterest in the Environment?

Why We Care About Animals

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THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S

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features

DEPARTMENTS

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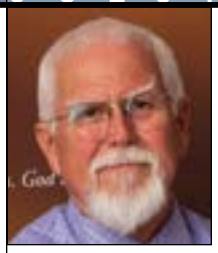


This World *Is* My Home

By Stephen Chavez

Whatever we say about inspiration, first-century Bible writers had scant knowledge of 21st-century cosmology.

The apostle Paul's remark about being "caught up to the third heaven" (2 Cor. 12:2, NIV) has forced centuries of Bible students to wonder exactly how many heavens there are.

The apostle Peter's description of the "day of the Lord," in which "the heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare" (2 Pet. 3:10, NIV), makes it obvious that he never envisioned a planet that would continue spinning for another two millennia. Indeed, that wasn't Peter's point. His point: Christ will return, and this world will eventually come to an end; consequently, believers will "make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him" (verse 14, NIV).

The message behind this warning is that developing our characters is our highest priority. Material things—our homes, cars, financial portfolios—are less significant than our relationship with Christ. If Christ had, in fact, returned during the lifetimes of those who heard his descriptions of end-time events (Matthew 24), we who live in the 21st century would not need to be concerned about climate change, global warming, species extinctions, or threats to natural resources.

If Jesus Is Coming, Why Bother?

But here we are, 2,000 years later. And, as with nearly everything that's part of our collective conversation, convictions about being stewards of the planet range widely from extreme to extreme. If Christ is coming soon, why bother caring for Earth? Let the planet care for itself. Paul wrote: "For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.... The creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God" (Rom. 8:19-21, NIV). Translation: the only thing preventing the end of the bondage and decay of the planet is Christ's return and the glorification of God's people.

So, say some, let's not be sidetracked by dire warnings about climate change; let's focus instead on proclaiming the gospel. When Jesus returns, the condition of the planet won't matter; it will all be consumed by unquenchable fire.

But if Paul saw the degradation of Earth when he was alive, what would he say now?

- Concentrations of carbon dioxide (CO_2) have increased by 49 percent since 1850.
- Since 1880, Earth's temperature has risen 1.18 degrees Celsius. Nineteen of the warmest years have occurred since 2000.
- Arctic sea ice has decreased 13 percent per decade, with 2012 having the lowest extent on record.
- Since 2002, polar ice sheets have decreased by 151 metric tons per year.
- The average sea level around the world has risen nearly 7 inches in the last 100 years.
- The past 20 years have seen the warmest ocean temperatures on record.[1]
- Wildfires, hurricanes, and tidal surges have displaced historically large numbers of people.

Of course, nobody alive during the apostles' time would have had any way of quantifying the "bondage and decay" of the planet. So why would it matter whether Christians cared for Earth? And if human impact on climate were negligible, as some claim, what would first-century believers have made of the suggestion that the planet had to be protected? What should we make of that perception now?

A Balancing Act

The delicate condition of the planet can be traced back to Creation, to the very first inhabitants of the Garden of Eden. "Then God said, 'Let us make mankind ...

To have dominion over the environment is to recognize our role as stewards in caring for the planet, whether Jesus comes now or in a thousand years.

so that they may rule over the fish ... the birds ... the livestock and all the wild animals.' ... God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish ... and the birds ... and over every living creature'" (Gen. 1:26-28, NIV).

The images that most likely come to mind are courtesy of Harry Anderson, who illustrated *The Bible Story* series authored by Arthur Maxwell. In those books, ruling over Earth meant Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel harvesting fruits and vegetables and being entertained by the animals that were part of the petting zoo that was the Garden of Eden.

That Adventists (and other Christians) have been slow to jump on the climate bandwagon may have more to do with how we read the Bible than with environmentalism.

But after sin, the climate changed and humanity's relationship to the environment became adversarial. "Cursed is the ground because of you. ... It will produce thorns and thistles for you. ... By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food" (Gen. 3:17-19, NIV). Survival became the name of the game.

"Let them have dominion" is how the King James Version of the Bible translates Genesis 1:26, the passage describing humanity's original role in caring for the planet. Many believed this implied that God created humanity to dominate, to be domineering, and to use the planet and its resources for its own comfort and advancement. This may be what led those who lived after the Flood to declare: "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves" (Gen. 11:4, NIV).

The desire for dominion is what led those who came to the "new world" to claim for their monarchs those lands they "discovered" and to subjugate those who were already living civilized (not savage) lives. It powered the westward expansion of the United States, decimating indigenous people and forcing many species into near extinction. It plundered natural resources, leaving very few places untouched by human contact.

But to rule over the planet is not to ruin it, despoil it, or prevent it from being used and appreciated by future generations. It is not sacrificing long-term sustainability for short-term profits. To have dominion over the environment is to recognize our role as stewards in caring for the planet, whether Jesus comes now or in a thousand years.

Humanity's Role

Now that Christ has delayed his coming, believers and nonbelievers must grapple with the reality of human-influenced climate change.

The results are indisputable: wildfires in North and South America, Australia, Europe, and other parts of the world have devastated thousands of square miles of forest cover, as well as countless buildings, forever disrupting the lives of thousands of individuals. Hurricanes, typhoons, and floods, formerly described as "100-year storms," happen with much greater frequency. Storm surges affect coastal cities around the world.

The question is not whether climate change is affecting the planet, but whether humanity can do anything to slow or reverse the process.

In the first century, when Paul wrote that "the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth" (Rom. 8:22, NIV), Earth's population was approximately 300 million. Today's population is 7.9 billion. If a significant portion of that number could be persuaded to take climate change seriously, and take steps to combat it, would that even make a difference?

In fact, if the recent past has shown anything, it's that the planet is remarkably resilient.

Beginning in 1868, the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland, Ohio, caught fire at least 13 times as a result of pollution. A *Time* magazine article in 1969 described the Cuyahoga as a river that "oozes rather than flows." From Akron to Cleveland, the river was devoid of fish. The Cuyahoga River fire of 1969 was the impetus for the passing of the Clean Water Act and the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Nearly 30 years of remedial actions resulted in the Cuyahoga's designation in 1998 as one of 14 American Heritage Rivers. Forty-four species of fish now inhabit the river. While water quality still must be monitored and pollution levels spike at certain times of the year, the Cuyahoga is a testament to the role of human cooperation in nature's resiliency.

So the results of climate change can be mitigated, if not reversed, by coordinated, informed human activity.

What We Think We Know

That Adventists (and other Christians) have been slow to jump on the climate bandwagon may have more to do with how we read the Bible than with environmentalism.

First, if God created the world by divine fiat, what possible effect could mere humans have in altering the course of nature? A moment of divine creation, not billions of years of evolution, caused Earth to assume its present form. And only other divine acts—the Flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the crossing of the Red Sea—could alter the natural flow of water, wind, earth, and fire.

Second, the Adventist view of last-day events reveals a complicated relationship with nature. While some are fixated on the spiritual struggle between good and evil—Sabbath-keepers forbidden to buy or sell, people imprisoned for refusing to worship on Sunday, an epic and violent struggle over the validity of the Ten Commandments—also present is the extent to which the environment plays a role in last-day events. Take a look at the symbolic language of Revelation's seven last plagues (Revelation 16). Several of them reveal a striking similarity to conditions faced today by many of the world's populations:

- **Angel two** – the sea becomes like the blood of a dead person, and every living thing dies (pollution and overfishing)
- **Angel three** – rivers and springs become blood, that is, incapable of sustaining life (pollution)
- **Angel four** – the sun is allowed to scorch people with fire (heatwaves, droughts, wildfires).
- **Angel five**: people plunged into darkness (limited natural resources, power outages)
- **Angel six** – the [lifegiving] water of the Euphrates is dried up (extreme drought)

If the deterioration of Earth is the result of God's judgment on a rebellious planet, why fight it? Why worry about rising temperatures and sea levels? If sustainability is a losing battle, let's just throw in the towel and admit that we believe in evolution—survival of the fittest (read: *richest*)—and that only those equipped with wealth and resources can survive the effects of climate change.

Or, we could admit that our care for the planet is directly related to our worship of "him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water" (Rev. 14:6, NIV) and that by pushing our environment to the edge of sustainability, we are dishonoring him who created all things good. We could emulate those in Nineveh who responded to Jonah's warning with the words: "Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways.... Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish" (Jon. 3:8-9, NIV).

Good stewardship and good science may yet turn us from the path of unsustainability, which we've been on for so many years (but become aware of relatively recently).

After all, this world is still our home—for now. AT

[1] Climate.NASA.gov.

THE WORLD I WANT TO LEAVE TO MY CHILDREN

By Lindsey Abston Painter

Aaaaaaachooo!

My 10-year-old and 12-year-old kids giggled. "Mom, you always sneeze so *loud!*" the 12-year-old complained. I sighed. It was September. Long after allergy season should be over.

Each year my allergies get worse. People I know who have never had allergies are developing them. My own kids are starting to get the itchy, watery eyes and uncontrollable sneezing that is so characteristic of a seasonal pollen allergy. A few years ago, I saw an article with the headline, "Worst Allergy Season Ever?" I rolled my eyes. Every year they say it's the worst allergy season ever. It can't be the worst allergy season ever every single year, can it?

Apparently, it can. According to a study in 2012, climate change is causing pollen counts to rise dramatically, with the pollen count predicted to double by 2040.[1] That means that every successive year will be the worst allergy season ever.

The Discouraging Truth

In many ways I believe the world is getting better. I only have to look as far as my own children to see how easily they take up the mantle of social justice that people before them have had to fight and suffer for. My daughter's best friend is nonbinary, and when I'm excited about how accepting everyone is, she rolls her eyes. "Mom, it's no big deal," she says to me.

Movement on these issues comes slowly. The road from something being illegal, to socially unacceptable, to discriminated against, to unequal, to "no big deal" is long.

I'm glad to say that in some important areas, my children are living the final stages of it.

I work in mental health, and I spend my days doing everything I can to make the world a better place. My hope is that one day someone can have trauma, neurodivergence, or a mental illness, and society will provide natural support for them. And when I'm excited to see people treating one another so much better, they'll roll their eyes at me and say, "Lindsey, it's no big deal."

My children remind me that a better world is possible, and even probable! They are wonderful people, and the world is a better place for their existing in it.

Keeping the World from Ending

But it won't happen if they are spending all of their time trying to keep the world from ending.

You think I'm exaggerating. But climate scientists all basically agree that we are already past the point of no return when it comes to the damage we have caused. The best we can do now is to stop doing damage.

Climate change is something that has proven difficult to get people interested in. For one thing, it's a slow disaster. A tsunami is a rapid, easily observable disaster. We see the damage. We feel the human suffering. So with an earthquake or a fire; these happen immediately, and we can address them. Climate change is too slow, and the solutions are too complicated. It's hard to get passionate about something we can't see or fully comprehend.

Yet tsunamis, earthquakes, and fires are all things that can be caused by climate change. Those things happened in the past, but the incidents are increasing sharply! What are some other effects from climate change we can expect to see?[2]

Droughts, severe storms, extinction of thousands of species of animals, extreme weather, rising sea levels, melting ice in the Arctic, reduced agricultural yields (leading to: famine), insect outbreaks (yuck!), decrease in water quality, diseases in plants and trees….

The list goes on. My children are going to make the world better, but at the same time they'll be facing unprecedented environmental challenges.

What Can I Do?

Another part of the problem is that it's mostly not up to me. I can recycle, and I do. I can conserve my water, and I do. I can reduce my use of plastic, and I do. I can avoid eating meat, which is easy for this vegetarian girl.

But no matter how much I do, and no matter how much my neighbors do, our personal consumption (even cumulative) is only a small fraction of the problem. The movement for individuals to take responsibility for climate change is an intentional one, crafted by large corporations to shift the blame from themselves onto individuals. But the truth is that 71% of harmful emissions are made by just 100 companies worldwide.[3]

That means that even if every single individual and all the rest of the companies on the entire planet changed their habits to be 100% green overnight, we could still only reduce harmful emissions by 29%.

So, who can reduce climate change?

We shouldn't abdicate our responsibilities as individuals just because of the disparity between us and large companies. But ultimately, if we want to save this planet, we need to focus on what's causing the majority of damage to Earth. Regulating those top 100 companies (mostly energy and fossil-fuel companies) will make a big difference.

Leaving It to My Children

This is where I get stuck, because that seems hopeless. The older I get, the more hopeless it feels. The systems are the problem, and every single one of them needs a major overhaul. Governments, capitalism, medicine, energy, policing, justice, and dozens more. How can I—a single person, no matter how passionate—make any difference in the face of these systems that have lasted through generations?

This is where I keep coming back to my children. If I have become cynical and bitter in my view of society as a result of seeing the enormity of the task, my children have not. They are young and naïve, and they believe in their power to change things, to right the wrongs.

And you know what? I believe in them. They can. Young people today are amazing, and they are going to remake the world better and stronger than people in my generation can even imagine.

But only if we don't destroy it before they get their chance. I don't want to let the reluctance of society to see the urgency of this matter be the death of us all—or worse, the death of our children. I do not want my legacy on this planet to be as part of the last generation to reach adulthood before Earth turned into a post-apocalyptic hellscape.

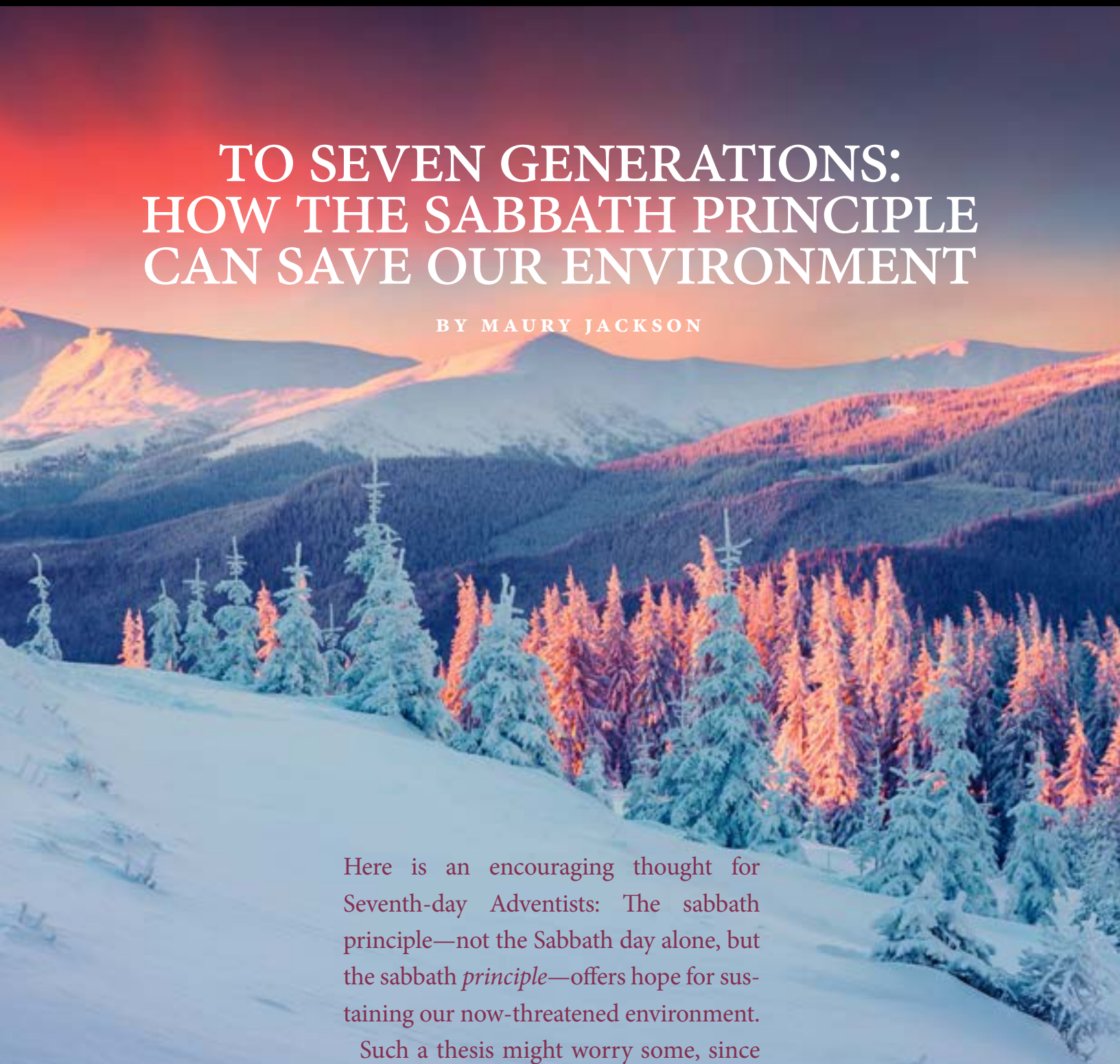
Jesus once said, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matt. 7:11, KJV). Perhaps it's time to turn that around: Having received the great gift of this planet from God, how much more should we give that gift—improved, or at least not destroyed—to our children?

For the sake of humanity. For the sake of Adventists. For the sake of our children. For the sake of Emery, Warren, Maya, and Sophie, please. Let's do something. Before it's too late. AT

[1] Stephanie Pappas, "Study: Pollen Counts to More Than Double by 2040," Live Science website (Nov. 9, 2012).
[2] "The Effects of Climate Change," NASA's Global Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet website.
[3] Keoni Jones, "Individuals Are Not to Blame for Climate Change," *The Michigan Daily (Sept. 26, 2021).*

TO SEVEN GENERATIONS: HOW THE SABBATH PRINCIPLE CAN SAVE OUR ENVIRONMENT

BY MAURY JACKSON



Here is an encouraging thought for Seventh-day Adventists: The sabbath principle—not the Sabbath day alone, but the sabbath *principle*—offers hope for sustaining our now-threatened environment.

Such a thesis might worry some, since the environment is a politically hot topic. It worries others, particularly seventh-day Sabbatarians, because it separates the sabbath principle from the Sabbath day.

But the case I make here is that biblically, there is more to the Sabbath than weekly church services.

A Land Ethic

Let us begin this exploration with two different approaches to land rights.

Judeo-Christians affirm that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof" (Psa. 24:1, KJV).[1] To deny that God is the landlord of this world does not mean you simply affirm that Earth is *not* the Lord's. It implies a more radical claim: namely, "Earth belongs *to no one:* not severally nor collectively. Those who are powerful enough can do what they want with it."

These contrasting claims show how different starting points impact proposed solutions. Whether or not a cosmic landlord exists, the conflicting assertions (i.e., "the earth is the Lord's" versus "Earth belongs to no one") are the first points for Christians to settle regarding how to treat the natural order.

How might I live differently if our world belongs to the Lord versus if it belongs to no one, and so can be used or misused by anyone? At minimum, to believe the former requires a reverent embrace of my own limits. To believe the latter permits the rigorous use of our shared real estate without limitations.

Applying the Sabbath Principle

Let's be clear: Seventh-day Adventist Christians regard Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, Catholics, and all others formed in other Christian denominations as Jesus' followers. Only a minor difference separates those who advocate Saturday-Sabbath observance from those who advocate Sunday-Lord's Day observance.

So, while we might disagree on which day should be observed, advocates of both Saturday and Sunday worship assume that the "moral must" in the Sabbath command centers on a day. But is the "moral must" in the fourth commandment only about procuring the *correct* day, or is it about a principle of rest historically exhibited in a one-in-seven-day cycle?

If we accept (even partially) the latter proposition, then we have permission to expand the sabbath principle into other areas of sabbath-rest practice. The Bible mentions one of these explicitly: the Jubilee year.

The prophetic record of Judah's kings ends with a cryptic and ominous warning for a group who advocated for the seven-day weekly Sabbath yet neglected to keep the seven-weeks-of-years Jubilee sabbath. It posts God's eviction notice to them! Here are the words of the Chronicler: "He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, *until the land had made up for its sabbaths*. All the days that it lay desolate *it kept sabbath*, to fulfill seventy years" (2 Chron. 36:20-21, NRSV, emphasis mine).

> Judeo-Christian religion, as seen in the covenant God made with his people at Sinai, opts for ethical holism over ethical egoism.

Some who recoil at the socialist[2] implications of the Jubilee law are quick to note the lack of historical evidence that this law was ever practiced. They view such a law as too unrealistic to practice in our actual world. But the *real* should never be conflated to the point of identity with the *actual.* Potential results are real, even if they're yet to be actualized.

The prophetic warning in 2 Chronicles gives a reason for their eviction: if Earth belongs to the Lord, then God can limit human wealth-building schemes. Nature has no unlimited resources and offers no unlimited economic growth opportunities. To think otherwise is to thoughtlessly succumb to an end like that

EGOISTIC ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC	HOLISTIC ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC
Premise: Because I want to maximize consumption.	Premise: Because we want to maximize human satisfaction.
Conclusion: Therefore, I search for the optimal pattern of production.	Conclusion: Therefore, we search for the optimal pattern of consumption.

of the people of the Davidic dynasty: evicted, expelled, cast out, homeless, dispossessed of God's original intention for us.

Philosopher Lisa Newton may have unwittingly recast the sabbath Jubilee principle for us Sabbatarians in a way that applies to modern environmental concerns. She suggests, "No practice shall be regarded as 'sustainable' unless it can be continued without degrading the environment that nurtures it through the *seventh generation* from its initiation."[3] In other words, live now so that seven generations from now can receive the benefits of your action.

Two contrasting ways for how a social arrangement can nurture personal virtues are ethical egoism and ethical holism.[4]

Ethical Egoism

The virtues nurtured by an egoistic environmental ethic are seen today in market-driven, late-stage, capitalist practices. By giving a vigorously competitive market free reign, we decide to whom Earth will belong. It logically ends up in the hands of those persons who develop it by the frontier virtues of courage and risk-taking.

This social vision is organized to reward the *individual's* rights. It is not even anthropocentric; it is individual-centered.

This is the logical outgrowth of a belief that Earth belongs to no one, so it might as well be used up by anyone. If the planet belongs to no one, it becomes difficult to argue against an egocentric ethic. In the ethical egoist model, Earth is up for grabs. But that model isn't working very well.

We have tried to protect the environment through measures based on this sort of egoistic moral vision. We try economic incentives, educational campaigns to increase awareness, and democratically legislated laws to enforce (usually quite modestly) environmental sustainability.

In the end, because of our commitment to individualism, these efforts prove ineffective. If Paul Hawken, et al., are correct, "In the past half century, the world has lost a fourth of its topsoil and a third of its forest cover. At present rates of destruction, we will lose 70 percent of the world's coral reefs in our lifetime, host to 25 percent of marine life."[5] Lisa Newton says of these failed efforts, "The incentives and regulations available to us—to all our governments, at any level, in any part of the world—are at best sea anchors in an everlasting hurricane, slowing the pace of assured destruction, with no possibility (even logical) of ultimate reversal."[6] None of the measures organized around ethical egoistic models stops pollution, suburban sprawl, deforestation, agricultural pesticide infestation, tree farming, and other practices that are killing humanity.

Continuing to tweak this ethical vision at a time such as this is like tuning the strings on a fiddle while Rome burns.

Ethical Holism

To think beyond ethical individualism toward a kind of ethical holism is not to value the community over and against the individual. Says Lisa Newton, "it simply insists that the being cannot be considered outside of the role that it plays in the community, and that its 'right' to protection is not possessed by it as an individual, but only in virtue of that role."[7]

Judeo-Christian religion, as seen in the covenant God made with his people at Sinai, opts for ethical holism over ethical egoism. *God* makes a *covenant* with the *whole community* of Israel.

Here we begin to develop the value of the sabbath principle. In the covenantal documents of the Pentateuch, the "John Hancock signature"—the divine mark that stood out—was the sabbath principle. Like those sticky, colored tabs posted throughout a home buyer's contract to indicate where to initial, the Sabbath's moral signature repeats right through the mosaic covenant.

Yet, says Willard Swartley, "Precisely because the command is in the moral code, the essence of the Sabbath is the moral principle, not the specific day."[8]

We weekly Sabbatarians must understand (as we saw in 2 Chronicles above) that the Sabbath was more than a day to go to church. Sabbath wasn't merely a weekly labor law (Ex. 20:8-11); it was also a yearly debt forgiveness law (Deut. 15:1-6) and a multi-yearly economic law for social revolution (Lev. 25:8ff.).

The week was the fundamental element of the sabbath principle, but it went beyond the seven-day cycle to a larger, more holistic set of moral principles. When the Jubilee counts off years, these years are regarded as *weeks* of years: "You shall count off seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the period of seven weeks of years gives forty-nine years…. And you shall

hallow the fiftieth year" (Lev. 25:8-10, NRSV). That the fiftieth, and not the forty-ninth, year was hallowed illustrates that the sabbath principle captures the moral imperative in the command, and not the specific day-ness of Saturday.

Today, the moral imperative might call for *weekly* Sabbatarians such as us to adopt Lisa Newton's Jubilee-like seventh-generation rule for saving our world: manage Earth so that our world is environmentally sustained for seven—a week of—generations.

Is the "moral must" in the fourth commandment only about procuring the *correct* day, or is it about a principle of rest historically exhibited in a one-in-seven-day cycle?

The Center of Environmental Ethics

It is time for Adventist Christians to take the sabbath principle and put it into practice in a form required for today's environmental crisis. Remember, Jesus said the sabbath principle was given to benefit *humankind*, not just individual human beings.

All ethical proposals locate a center of value. As noted earlier, capitalistic approaches make the individual the center of value; the environment is for anyone tough enough to make use of it. Anthropocentric approaches make humankind the center of value; the environment is for humanity's sake. Biocentric approaches make all living entities the center of value; the environment is for life's sake.

But in the sabbath principle, we see a theocentric approach, as represented in the covenant God made with his people at Sinai. References to the Jubilee and the covenantal agreements make the divine will the center of value: protect the environment *for God's sake*.

While humans are beneficiaries of this ethic, individuals aren't the center of value in it. Theocentric thinking does not say, "We don't need to worry about the environment, because God owns it and is responsible for the land." This might lead to the negative consequences of Judah's monarchical experiment—only in our time, rather than just ending with exile, it might mean Earth's destruction.

Ancient Israel originally recognized that a healthy economic arrangement calls for limitations, which found their expression in the sabbath laws. Today we Adventists can repurpose the Sabbath vision by advocating for something like Lisa Newton's Jubilee-like seventh-generation principle: "No practice shall be regarded as 'sustainable' unless it can be continued without degrading the environment that nurtures it through the *seventh generation* from its initiation."[9]

And as a global collective, we can inaugurate a social movement that both honors God and saves the planet. AT

[1] See Dianne Bergant, *The Earth Is the Lord's: The Bible, Ecology, and Worship* (1998).
[2] It is important to remain mindful that not all socialist visions are the same: Marxist socialism is not the same as Christian socialism. Furthermore, not all capitalist visions are the same; capitalism likewise comes in many species (i.e., industrial capitalism—with varieties of laissez-faire, social welfare, national security—financial capitalism, state-run capitalism, disaster capitalism, natural capitalism, etc.).
[3] Lisa H. Newton, *Ethics and Sustainability: Sustainable Development and the Moral Life* (2003), p. 5.
[4] Inspiration for this table came from E. F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful: Economics As If People Mattered*, Introduction by Theodore Roszak (1973), p. 51.
[5] Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins, and L. Hunter Lovins, *Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution* (1999), p. 4.
[6] Newton, p. 7.
[7] ibid., p. 23.
[8] Willard M. Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women: Case Issues in Biblical Interpretation* (1983), p. 75.
[9] Newton, p. 5.

CARE FOR ANIMALS: A MORAL IMPERATIVE?

By Melissa Brotton

I have often been asked, "Why put resources into animal rescue, when so many people in the world—refugees, children who are trafficked, people with addictions, indigent families, people with chronic medical conditions, etc.—need help, too?"

In one sense this question sets up a false dichotomy, indicating that in order to put energies into animal causes, we must forgo efforts toward human ones. In my 15-year career as an animal-rescuer, only once did I feel forced to choose between helping an animal and helping a person. In cases of disaster and triage, common sense has to be at the forefront; priority must be placed on human life.

But in another sense, we can legitimately ask how limited resources can best be used in Christ's work. Followers of Jesus play two seemingly conflicting roles: as kingdom-builders, but also as stewards of God's creation. Both roles are vital. Jesus clearly told us that kingdom-building comes first. Once we have that priority straight, all things are possible. Jesus attached a great promise to "seek first the kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:33), saying that *all* of the other things would be added unto us. Followers of Christ are people-helpers first, but we should also help animals when it is in our power to do so. There will always be dilemmas about how to use our personal resources, so budgeting, priority-setting, and sacrificial giving all come into play.

Helping Animals Benefits Humans

There is an intrinsic relationship between helping animals and helping humans. According to Albert Schweitzer, extending compassion to animals is part of having good character. He extended the phrase "reverence for life" to animals. "A man is ethical only when life, as such, is sacred to him, that of plants and animals as that of his fellow men, and when he devotes himself helpfully to all life that is in need of help."[1]

Helping animals and helping people go hand in hand. Each time I invest in animal rescue, a person benefits in some way, whether it is someone who adopts an animal or someone who demonstrates concern about the animal.

There are direct benefits for human health when we lend a hand to animals, just as when we help our fellow humans. For example, when we give to a charity we believe in—such as one that benefits animals—we get a "giver's high," a chemical euphoria caused by neural stimulation of the brain's pleasure domains and dopamine release.

Finally, object lessons are brought about by being involved in the animal world. Animals inspire us with their joy, patience, and long-suffering—qualities attributed to God.

Animals Are Important in Themselves

As creatures of God, and as integral parts of biotic communities, animals have intrinsic value. Their lives matter to them. Squirrels flee when the shadow of a hawk passes over them. Mice wince when they experience an electric shock. Cats fight over territories and mating partners. Bats distinguish their pups from a host of other bat pups. Chimpanzees and meerkats display dominance hierarchies and individual personalities within their colonies. Evidence shows that animals care about their own lives and that they guard the lives of their offspring, as well.

Furthermore, animals form ecosystems that maintain an integral balance for the sustenance of Earth and its occupants. Pollinators such as bees, butterflies, moths, hummingbirds, and bats play critical ecological roles for plant, soil, forest, and human survival. Even the water cycle is dependent on pollination, because plants return moisture to the air. According to the United States Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Forest Service, 80 percent of the 1,400 crop plants around the world depend on pollinators.[2]

The Bible account of Creation shows clearly that animals could have dwelt on Earth without the presence of humans. In Genesis 1, birds, fish, creeping things, and land animals were all created on days five and six of creation week, before humans were created. Broadly speaking, God is responsible for the sustenance of Earth. Said the Psalmist: "You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing" (Psa. 145:16, NKJV). But because of human sin, animals now suffer; our role as stewards is to mitigate their suffering as much as we can.

The Bible Instructs Us to Care for Animals

An ethic for animal rescue is built into the instructions God gave to the Israelites for the return of stray animals to their owners. "You shall not see your brother's ox or his sheep going astray and ignore them.

You shall take them back to your brother" (Deut. 22:1, ESV). If the owner was not home or lived too far away, the rescuer was to take the animal back to his own home and keep it safe until the owner came for it (verse 2).

The Israelites were instructed to treat their animals as neighbors, in some cases even as family. God established labor laws for working animals. "You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain" (Deut. 25:4, ESV), allowing oxen to eat freely of the grain for which they worked. This was simultaneously a cure for human greed.

Helping animals and helping people go hand in hand. Each time I invest in animal rescue, a person benefits in some way.

Animals were to participate in household activities, including work and rest (keeping Sabbath). In fact, the command of Exodus 23:12—"Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; that your ox and your donkey may have rest, and the son of your servant woman, and the alien, may be refreshed" (ESV)—specifies that the law concerning rest from work is primarily for the purpose of not overworking animals as well as humans.

In the wisdom literature of the Bible we read, "A righteous man regards the life of his animal, But the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel" (Prov. 12:10, NKJV). This verse implies more than we might see at first glance. Here, Shelomoh contrasts the deeds of the wicked with those of the righteous. He says that even the best acts of the wicked are considered cruel when compared with how good people act, because good people, acting as God does, care even for the needs of their animals. How much more, then, are righteous people willing to take care of all people.

The New Testament also provides principles of animal stewardship. Like God, we will keep watch for sparrows that fall. We care because God cares first.

Noteworthy Advocates for Animal Welfare

Animals have had their human defenders throughout history. During the 19th century, an awakening regarding animal welfare coincided with the great spiritual awakening. The life of abolitionist William Wilberforce exemplifies the intertwining nature of helping both animals and humans. After playing a major role in ending England's African slave trade, Wilberforce helped found Britain's Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in 1824.

A number of authors have written of the desensitizing effect on humans when they mistreat animals or ignore their suffering. Anna Sewell's international bestseller *Black Beauty* (1877) was written not for children, but to raise an outcry against cruelty to horses.

In his anti-vivisection pamphlet "Some Popular Fallacies About Vivisection," Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (better known as Lewis Carroll), wrote that the chief evil in the human infliction of unnecessary pain on an animal was not in the suffering of the animal, but in the degrading effect on the character of the humans who inflict the pain.

Ellen White, another 19th-century moralist, denounced animal cruelty as evidence of soul degradation. "He who will abuse animals because he has them in his power is both a coward and a tyrant. A disposition to cause pain, whether to our fellow men or to the brute creation, is satanic. ... A record goes up to heaven, and a day is coming when judgment will be pronounced against those who abuse God's creatures."[3]

C. S. Lewis, outspoken in his views against unwarranted animal cruelty, also linked it to demoralized character: "In justifying cruelty to animals we put ourselves also on the animal level. We choose the jungle and must abide by our choice."[4]

Why It Matters

While animal rescue may not be the main thing we do, neither should we neglect it. We each have a part to play in the stewardship of Earth. Some of us are called to ministries that involve animals, but in the end it's all about helping people recognize God as Creator and Redeemer. Animal-rescue work has a wonderful potential to do both, as we allow God's glory to work through us for the good of people and animals. AT

[1] Albert Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought: An Autobiography.* Trans. C. T. Campion (1933), p. 188.
[2] "Why Is Pollination Important?" United States Department of Agriculture/U.S. Forest Service website, online at www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/importance.shtml.
[3] Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (1905), p. 443.
[4] C. S. Lewis, "Vivisection" (1947, p. 11), also published in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (1970), p. 228.

PETS, GRIEF, *and* BEING HUMAN

By Loren Seibold

We were on vacation when our house sitter called us to say that our cat was sick. The veterinarian told us the bad news: Mimi had had a stroke, and she wouldn't recover.

Mimi was elderly and frail, and we had already anticipated that her life wasn't going to be long. But it was hard to order her euthanization over the phone. It meant that a few days later we came home to a quiet, meowless house.

Mimi had been an inhabitant of our house, just as much as we were, for over 10 years. She wasn't a *person*, but she had a *personality*: we were as familiar with her ways and habits, uncomplicated as they were, as Carmen and I are with one another's.

I grew up on a farm, where animals were part of our business. I know the difference between livestock and pets. I am aware that from ancient times humans have relied on animals for survival, even eating their flesh. And Mimi is only one of many pets I've lost. (The pity of relationships with pets is that we generally outlive them.)

Still, I have never been able to think of animals as mere objects. Undoubtedly we anthropomorphize animals and attribute to them traits, motives, and thoughts that their minds are incapable of. Yet can anyone who has had a relationship with any of the higher animals doubt that they have feelings, preferences—consciousness?

So Mimi was not just a *thing* we lost, like forgetting your expensive iPad on the plane. She was our friend. Thus, our deep and real grief at losing her.

A Theology of Animals

The Abrahamic religions don't have a theology of the animal soul, as the Eastern nirvanic philosophies do. But the Bible says a lot about animals.

To the extent that we can guess God's purpose in creating animals first, it appears that they were a necessary part of an ecosystem into which humankind would be introduced at the end of the week. God summarizes the relationship thus: "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Gen. 1:28, NIV). Since it isn't clear what constitutes subduing and ruling the world, this has been interpreted to mean everything from a gentle coexistence with Earth and its creatures to destroying our living environment at will for economic gain.

I prefer to let the Genesis 2 account (thought by some scholars to be a partially recapitulated Creation account) govern the meaning of Genesis 1:28. Here, in what might even have been a playful scene, God brings the animals to Adam to be named (2:19). In Hebrew culture, naming implied relationship (cf. Gen. 17:5, Ex. 33:17); God, you'll recall, named Adam and Eve (Gen. 5:2). I can't help but see Adam's naming the animals as a relationship-building event between humankind and the other creatures. The implication is that we were given animals as partners in making a life here on Earth—not to abuse, nor merely for gain, but to be in relationship with.

The animal sacrifices were much more than something of economic value paid to God for sin. Remember that Cain's altar of agricultural produce wasn't acceptable, though it had value (Gen. 4:3, 5). If God's purpose was, as some think, to make us take sin seriously, then perhaps he asked for animal sacrifices because human beings instinctively recoil from killing: I don't suffer grief when I slice a potato, but I would if I had to kill a perfect lamb for my sins.

Noah, you'll recall, builds the ark to save not just his family, but all animal life (Gen. 7:14-15). But the Flood also marks a change in the human-animal relationship. "The fear and dread of you will fall on all the beasts of the earth, and on all the birds in the sky, on every creature that moves along the ground, and on all the fish in the sea; they are given into your hands" (Gen. 9:2, NIV).

Though the last line could be used to justify wanton exploitation of animals, the first line appears animal-centric. It suggests that God teaches the animals to flee us because humankind is no longer to be trusted: we were, after all, desiring to eat them!

But even eating animals seems to have been a concession to a crisis situation, not a first-order plan—an interpretation many Christian vegetarians hold.

Several texts speak of treating animals with kindness (Prov. 12:10; Ex. 23:5; Deut. 25:4; Num. 22:27-28; Ex. 23:11), but perhaps the most striking for those of us who are Sabbatarians is that one's livestock are to be given the advantage of the Sabbath rest (Ex. 23:12). Apparently this "sanctuary in time" blesses animals, too.

The Western concept of a pampered pet isn't found in Scripture, but it's hard for me to believe that if dogs were hanging about

under the table, snatching bits of food (Matt. 15:27), that the family's children didn't play with the pups and come to love them.

And let's not forget that Isaiah's picture of a new Earth reverses the aforementioned postdiluvian curse, showing human beings and animals no longer afraid of one another. Even such non-anthropomorphic creatures as snakes become friendly (Isa. 11:6-8), and apex predators are vegetarians (Isa. 65:25).

If friendly interaction with animals will be the norm in the afterlife, perhaps we Christians ought already to be practiced in it.

Pastoral Care

My purpose in this piece is not first theological, but to express the hope that we, as friends or family, pastors or counselors, would take people's relationships with their pets seriously—that we would mourn with them when they mourn, even as we mourn with them their lost human friends and family.

I am thinking of an elderly parishioner who had a blind and deaf terrier. Her children disliked Buster, complaining about his messes and smell and the vet bills and generally considering him far more trouble than he was worth. But her children visited only occasionally and, in fact, Buster was more present in her life than her busy children. When the dog died, she was privately incapacitated with grief.

Many are a little ashamed of their grief for an animal, and they have a hard time talking about it. This lady's children had already expressed their contempt for Buster, and most other people weren't especially interested. It was only a passing remark that alerted me that this woman had lost what was probably her best friend in the world. She was grateful that at least her pastor realized how important Buster had been, and that I wept a little with her.

My own first thought, when I found myself sobbing after deciding on my own pet Mimi's euthanization, was to feel a little embarrassed. What of all the people suffering in the world—and you're feeling so devastated over a mere animal?

But that isn't being fair to me or to other mourners of pets. Humorist Oscar Wilde was dead serious when he wrote this line: "Where there is sorrow, there is holy ground." My grief for Mimi evoked echoes of sadness from decades past. I remember saying to my wife when we were grieving Mimi, "Oh, all the losses we've suffered," as if seeing in that moment, dimly through the years, my father and mother, Carmen's father and mother, a sister-in-law, and grandparents.

Because the grief wasn't, and isn't, just about a white Persian cat. It is about being finite and dying and losing a little of ourselves day after day. It is about glimpsing an end that, however sweet some of the stops along the way, however precious the promises of what comes after, can't help but be a little bitter.

We Seventh-day Adventists, so logical and theological, are tempted to try to fix things with answers rather than simply grieving alongside the sorrowful. Most of us know enough not to say to a mother of a stillborn baby, "You can always have another one." But the principle is the same in all situations of loss: be present in another's grief, rather than trying to evade it or end it or excuse it.

I hope you would be more sensitive than to say something I once heard someone tell a grieving pet owner: "Good grief, you're crying over a stupid *cat*? There are millions of cats in the world. One is as good as another. Just get another one."

Pets in the Afterlife

People often wonder whether or not their pets will be in heaven. Despite hints about God's saving his lost creation (Rom. 8:22), there is no coherent biblical theology of animal salvation. It's probably wise not to speculate too deeply.

Still, I'll never forget my mother's simple but profound answer to my question when I was 11, "Will Pepper be in heaven?" She said, "God wants you to be perfectly happy in heaven, so I think God will give you a dog absolutely identical to Pepper in every way." As a child, it was a sufficient answer. And it still works. If I will be able to lie down next to a lion in heaven, I don't know why I can't anticipate having a black dachshund or a Persian cat, designed by God for *me*. And why shouldn't that dachshund or Persian cat be any less familiar with me than the *people* I lost and who will recognize me?

I don't know precisely God's attitude toward animals' "selfness" (I refrain from using the word "soul"), but I do know this: how we think and feel about animals says a great deal about *us* as human beings and as Christians. American author Matthew Scully doesn't argue for animal rights or animal souls. He does say, however, that our attitude toward them reflects upon our spirituality: "Animals are more than ever a test of our character, of mankind's capacity for empathy and for decent, honorable conduct and faithful stewardship. We are called to treat them with kindness, not because they have rights or power or some claim to equality, but in a sense because they don't; because they all stand unequal and powerless before us."[1]

You don't have to be an animal rights activist to appreciate that our relationships with animals can be holy. To love and care for animals is biblical, and to both love and grieve them is human. AT

[1] Matthew Scully, *Dominion: The Power of Man, the Suffering of Animals, and the Call to Mercy* (2002), pp. xi, xii.

EARTH IS OUR MOTHER TONGUE AND OUR COMMON LANGUAGE

By Elle Berry

One of my favorite books as a little girl was *To Space & Back,* a children's book about the historic 1983 trip of Sally Ride, the first American woman to go into space. I can't really remember reading the book so much as returning to its pictures again and again. I vividly recall a drawing of the inside of the space shuttle and photos of the astronauts performing daily activities, such as eating and sleeping.

And, of course, the pictures looking out of the shuttle windows showed space itself and Earth below. I was in awe as I looked down on this blue-green, bejeweled orb, with city lights decorating the surface like a strange Christmas globe adorned with twinkle lights. Enthralled as I was with the adventure of space, I was just as captivated by the unfamiliar view of this strange planetary shuttle we call home—or, as Mary Oliver puts it, "this, the one world we all belong to."

To Space & Back is one of my earliest memories of the profound perspective-altering effect of nature.

As long as I can remember, I have been disappearing into the woods. I often attribute this to my introversion and, sometimes, to my desire for adventure. I even occasionally let on to other people that I'm a hiker. Yet I can relate to what Instagrammer Tobin Mitnick recently said in a short video: "You know I'm not really a hiker, because I stop and look at stuff for like 20 minutes. So I'm more of a guy who likes to find 'a spot.'" I think the real reason I often wander into the woods is that I am just a girl who likes to find *a spot*—any place where I might go to perpetuate the perspective-altering awe that I first discovered while looking at pictures of space so many years ago.

Out of Step With Faith

Being such a child, and having grown into such a woman, I have often found myself out of step with my church. A strange aspect of modern Christians is that we have a paradoxical relationship with Earth. On one hand, the Bible is filled with imagery anchored into an ecological perspective and adorned with nature. References comparing your spirit to trees, roots, insects, and breezes? Check. Metaphors of birds and flowers? Also check.

Yet, back in the modern American church, these images lose their meaning as both our daily lives and our places of worship feel aborted from the natural world. We live and move in sterile containers; our work schedules and daily rhythms remain fixed from summer to winter, despite the fact that Earth appeals again and again to the necessity of seasons.

Neither American culture nor the churches within it seem to be rooted in the planet that is our home—a fact horrifically disorienting for those of us accustomed to running barefoot through the woods with soles for shoes, forever in search of "a spot."

Even more exasperating: despite a historic commitment among conservatives to conservation policy,[1] political lines in the United States have become increasingly dogmatic as environmental stewardship has become the latest battleground in the culture wars.

So while topics of stewardship abound throughout the Bible, it remains uncommon for churches to take stances about climate, care of resources, access to clean water, or other ecologically crucial topics. When was the last time you heard a sermon encouraging you to limit consumerism, cut down on plastics, or promote reusing and recycling? And even more importantly, when have you heard the church appeal to the government to do likewise on a policy level?

Does This World Matter?

That the Christian church lacks any consistent practice tied to stewardship of Earth is not lost to the onlooking world. When you combine that with the lopsided emphasis on Christian doctrines of heavenly kingdoms and a new Earth, the most obvious sense the church is conveying is that Christians do not regard themselves as citizens of this world, nor do they see themselves as accountable to the planet or the people with whom they share it as our only available home.

It seems that many Christians believe we are of another world and, therefore, this one is no longer our concern. Onlookers are not missing this testimony.

When did care for the planet cease to be a God-given mandate? From a biblical perspective, wasn't our first job description as humans to be stewards of Earth? And if so, how can we justify rampant corporate greed and consumerism, when it seems ever more likely to cost us not only our home, but also our calling?

Eugene Peterson's *The Message* paraphrase presents Genesis 1:26 as a call to responsibility: "God spoke: 'Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature So they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, And, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth.'"

Many Christians still see this passage as one of conquest. The King James Version uses "dominion" and "subdue"—words infused with the implication that might is right, words that justify using up Earth and its resources for one's own betterment and giving little regard to the outcomes for other living things.

Churches seem more likely to sermonize against the dangers of pantheism than to advocate for nature care. They seem more likely to label concerted environmental political agreements and policy as socialism than to actively stand in solidarity with those seeking Earth-related conservation and justice. This leaves the church divorced from our Earth-concerned neighbors, not to mention standing in contrast to the biblical call for stewarding—more signs of detachment from our home planet.

Most congregations place primary importance on the practice of gathering in a building to participate in a certain type of extroverted ceremony as the apex of Christian practice. This idolatry of ceremony leaves little room for the John Muir types, who quietly seek the wild spots where each soul might feel its worth, and displaces other Christian practices, such as solitude or care for Earth.

Tired of Religion

In recent years, life circumstances and political intensity have left my own soul feeling dry and weathered. I first looked to the church for solace and comfort—and, I regrettably admit, found it wanting. I've become glitchy and ragged around scriptures that used to infuse me with hope—not because my faith has become weaker, but because reality is a scanning pattern, and my brain, like one of Pavlov's dogs, is wired for association. What I mean is that verses I used to read to bolster my hope now cling to American folk religion, dripping off the arms of political mayhem as though they were Ignorance and Want tumbling off the robes of Charles Dickens' Ghost of Christmas Present.

When one is slogging through a personal spiritual desert, stumbling across the occasional oasis becomes ever more meaningful. A few months ago, a verse caught me off guard and I've found myself holding fast to the rendition of Matthew 11 in *The Message*, returning there again and again, as I do to electrolyte powder when I'm walking in the mountains. It says: "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly" (verses 28-30, MSG).

What an invitation to the weary soul! Not simply are you tired, but are you tired of religion? Jesus answers, "Come with me, and I'll help you find that *spot* you're looking for."

Looking for a Spot

For when you think of it, the Bible really is just a book about people who are looking for a spot. People who are not simply seeking and wandering, but also longing for a place and a moment where incarnation and resurrection spring forth like fresh water in the desert. In the desert, the mountains, the wilderness, the lakes, and on the many waters, again and again the Bible is a book about people in search of a spot, looking for the perspective-altering moment where spirit meets its maker.

And where better to meet your maker than where you are embodied in the places your maker made? And while the people in these stories are separated from us by thousands of years, multiple languages, and cultures, the thing we hold in common is this one place we call our home. Earth transcends time, holding us up, uniting us on common ground.

And if we're not careful, the church will entirely miss this moment. A tired and weary world is open and ready for nature narratives, longing for something that we share in common. The Bible is etched into just such a spot: a communal heritage to us, with Earth as its fixed point that we share across time. The planet bridges us across centuries to the Hebrews cloud of witnesses, the Greek world of seekers, and beyond.

Earth is our mother tongue and our common language. And even now, when gathering grows weary and religion becomes tedious, Earth remains a captivating spot, declaring God's glory for all those who listen. AT

[1] A great discussion of the 2018 book *The Republican Reversal: Conservatives and the Environment from Nixon to Trump,* by James Morton Turner and Andrew C. Isenberg, is found online in Christopher Solomon, "The GOP Has Turned Its Back on Conservation," *Outside* magazine (Sept. 11, 2018).

Caged Eggs, But Hold the Bacon

KINDNESS TO ANIMALS AS AN ADVENTIST FUNDAMENTAL

By Stephen Ferguson

Bacon and eggs—a famous food duo. Except of course, as any good Seventh-day Adventist knows, bacon is off the menu. But why, exactly, is that?

And what about eggs? Does it matter, for example, whether those eggs come from a battery of hens, where four to six chickens spend their entire lives in a wire cage the diameter of a sheet of paper?

Why a Doctrine About "Clean and Unclean" Foods?

Adventist food principles form one of our "distinctive" beliefs, which make us different (some might say weird) as compared to other Christians. As stated in Fundamental Belief 22, Seventh-day Adventists "abstain from the unclean foods identified in the Scriptures." We also promote vegetarianism.

Unfortunately, the fundamental belief doesn't explain why.

The most common response, the one I heard my entire life while growing up within the Seventh-day Adventist community, is that the Bible describes certain foods as "clean" or "unclean." For example: "You may eat any animal that has a divided hoof and that chews the cud. ... And the pig, though it has a divided hoof, does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you" (Lev. 11:3-7, NIV).

Are Adventists to Keep Jewish Ceremonial Laws?

The problem with citing Leviticus 11 is that it is an appeal to the Jewish Mitzvah, 613 rules from the Law of Moses, mostly found in the books Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These rules include wearing blue tassels (Num. 15:38), refraining from cutting the hair on the sides of the head or the corners of a beard (Lev. 19:27), or not wearing mixed-fiber fabrics (Lev. 19:19). In addition, a sacrificial system connected with the ancient Jewish Temple included laws regarding food (Lev. 6:6-7).

Even in the most observant Adventist churches, I have never seen any of these commands followed. Almost every Christian denomination explains this by distinguishing the ceremonial aspects of the Law (encompassing those commands about blue tassels and sacrificial killings) from its moral aspects (especially those found in the Ten Commandments). The ceremonial commands don't apply to Christians today, for "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Heb. 10:4, NIV). These were temporary symbols pointing to Jesus, the true sacrificial Lamb of God (John 1:29).

All historic creeds of Christianity approach the issue this way, distinguishing the temporary application of Jewish ceremonial rites and obligations from the eternal moral law.[1] The Seventh-day Adventist Church is no different, with the

General Conference's Biblical Research Institute similarly stating: "A common approach is to regard moral laws as timeless and universal principles governing relationships with God and with other human beings. Ceremonial laws were applicable only to the Israelite ritual system."[2]

This explains why Adventists say we should keep the seventh-day Sabbath enshrined in the Ten Commandments, yet it offers no explanation regarding why we would keep Old Testament food rules. They are not found in the Decalogue, but rather, form part a Jewish ceremonial system abrogated by the cross.

Should We Be Vegetarians if Pigs Are Smart?

So, can we eat bacon or not? If we look beyond the Jewish ceremonial law, the answer is a little hazy.

Some argue principles of health, noting that animals we can eat seem to be herbivores, with pigs being scavengers. Fundamental Belief 22 makes this health link. Nonetheless, building a hamartiology on health seems problematic. Concerning washing one's hands before eating, Jesus suggested this was not a matter of morality. "'Don't you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? For it doesn't go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.' (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)" (Mark 7:18-19, NIV).

Adventists also like to cite Paul, who said our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). Yet the context indicates he was talking about sex, not food. God no doubt wants us to be healthy, just as the Old Testament suggests that God wants us to dispose of our excrement hygienically (Deut. 23:12-13) or quarantine those with infectious diseases (Lev. 13:4)—not as concerns about ceremonial purity or even "sin," but as matters of practical common sense (Heb. 9:10, 13-14; Rom. 14:17).

Nevertheless, bacon or ham is no less healthy than the food consumed during the average Adventist potluck, with its cheese-laden main courses and sweet chocolate cakes for dessert, all washed down by sugary beverages.

Another argument suggests that edible animals are almost always domesticated and, therefore, no longer have the post-Flood curse of terror toward humanity (Gen. 9:2). Humans eat domesticated sheep and cows that are "owned" by humans, representing a pre-Fall state where humanity "ruled" the animal kingdom (Gen. 1:26). By contrast, unclean animals represent a wild jurisdiction outside the authority of humanity—a post-Fall "sacred contagion."[3] Even within the domesticated species, cows and sheep are quite docile, whereas pigs and horses retain a wild streak that sees them revert quickly to a feral state.

Still others argue that edible animals are less intelligent or sentient. For example, pigs are said to be very smart creatures—probably smarter than our pet dogs. Cows and sheep, a little less so. At the other end are fish. Since the resurrected Christ ate broiled fish but not mammalian meat (Luke 24:42-43), Catholics uphold the tradition on Fridays and during Lent. Still, it seems problematic to argue that a less intelligent creature (including a less intelligent human being) is more deserving of pain and death than a smart one. And if intelligence is key, why don't we all eat insects?

Although these arguments have merit, none seem wholly satisfying. This emphasizes that while not mandatory (Rom. 14:2), it is an Advent and Edenic ideal to be vegetarian (Gen. 1:29)—not out of some sort of Old Testament notion of ritual purity, but as a New Testament response of love toward God as Creator.

Does Kindness to Animals Go Beyond What We Eat?

In light of the above problems, perhaps we need to ground Adventism's distinctive approach to food upon a better foundation: kindness to animals.

From Adam to Noah to Jesus, the Bible repeatedly shows God's care for his creatures (Matt. 6:26). More than just a question of food under Fundamental Belief 22, the ethical treatment of animals intersects several Seventh-day Adventist beliefs and practices.

Without intending to be exhaustive, Fundamental Beliefs 6, 7, and 21 address the role of humanity in caring for the world, the environment, and everything in it (Gen. 2:15). Fundamental Belief 8, about the Great Controversy, stresses a cosmic conflict affecting the whole Earth, with nature itself in bondage to sin and needing to be saved (John 3:16; Rom. 8:21). Fundamental Belief 20, about the Sabbath, specifically mentions that the fourth commandment provides rest for livestock as well as people (Ex. 20:10; Matt. 12:11).

Many excuses for the cruel treatment of animals may stem from a misunderstanding about the nature of immortal beings, a presumption Adventists reject in Fundamental Belief 26. Finally, Fundamental Belief 28 emphasizes the Adventist hope of a new Earth, where death and predation ends. This is not merely paradise for humans, but equally for lambs and wolves (Isa. 11:6).

If Pigs Go to Heaven, Should We Eat Them?

Grounding ourselves in a broader theological and ethical foundation toward the kind treatment of animals, including the ideal of vegetarianism, we might even go as far as to ask whether animals have an afterlife. Pigs included.

While Eastern religions have a developed theology on this issue, Christians historically seem not to have given it much thought. However, this may owe as much to the pervading influence of ancient Greco-Roman culture as to a reading of the Bible.

Ancient Greeks including Aristotle taught that animals were lesser beings that did not possess immortal souls, whereas the Bible suggests that neither humans nor animals have immortal souls. "Surely the fate of human beings is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both.... All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return" (Eccl. 3:19-20, NIV). Aristotle's ideas entered Christianity through Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas, who likewise believed that animals had "perishable souls" but that human souls were "imperishable."

These ideas impacted wider Western thought through philosopher René Descartes. He said animals were mere *automata*—biological machines. We now know, of course, that animals are not mere automatons but are sentient living beings, with many species able to feel pleasure and pain, grief and love. Ellen White sagely commented that animals have an inherent dignity and self-respect akin to humans: "How often those creatures of God's care suffer pain, endure hunger and thirst, because they cannot make known their wants. And how often is it determined by the mercy or the caprice of man, whether they receive attention and kindness, or neglect and abuse. Punishment given in passion to an animal is frequently excessive and is then absolute cruelty. Animals have a kind of dignity and self-respect, akin to that possessed by human beings."[4]

Just as the fruit of salvation involves kindness and mercy to fellow humanity (Matt. 7:21-23), White also suggests—radically, even by today's standards—that how we treat animals is relevant to salvation: "There were beasts in Eden, and there will be beasts in the earth made new. Unless the men who have indulged in cruelty toward God's creatures here, overcome that disposition and become like Jesus, kind and merciful, they will never share in the inheritance of the righteous."[5]

We don't know whether animals have an afterlife. But given the propensity for animals to share human-like qualities, maybe we should treat pigs on Earth as if they might go to heaven.

So What About Those Caged Eggs?

Despite abrogating the ritual and ceremonial aspects of Old Testament food rules, the New Testament apostles nevertheless ensured that three of their four commands to Gentiles mentioned in Acts 15 were about ethically sourced animal products: "It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood" (Acts 15:19-20, NIV).

It can certainly be argued that the apostles were summarizing the well-known Noahic covenant, those parts of the Law that pre-dated Jewish ceremonial law and already applied to Gentiles. Thus, observing that Noah had several pairs of clean animals on the ark, while we should reject Jewish sacrificial practices with temple priests and altars, eating only clean animals has nothing to do with ceremonial purity or Judaism.

Nonetheless, the apostles seemed much more concerned with *how* meat was prepared than *what* was eaten. Strangely then, in contrast to Jewish kosher practices, we Adventists have traditionally given little thought to how animals and animal products (including those caged eggs) end up on our dinner tables. It seems we have this backward!

Should Ethical Treatment of Animals Be a Fundamental Belief?

In my opinion, Seventh-day Adventist fundamental beliefs are already too numerous and becoming dangerously prescriptive. Still, rather than the current emphasis within Fundamental Belief 22 on "Christian Behavior," I could see a new focus on the ethical treatment of animals as a preferred driving force behind Adventist distinctives. Maybe I'm trying to motivate myself here, because I am far from a saint on matters of diet.

Nothing is explicitly wrong with following Old Testament Jewish commands, provided we don't point fingers at others for not wearing blue tassels on their clothes. We should be concerned with our personal health, although obsession about it can (ironically) be unhealthy.

Whether we ultimately decide to eat bacon or not, a decision based on one's concern for other creatures is both better to justify and easier to explain. And our decision about bacon might be pointless and hypocritical if we overlook those eggs produced by caged chickens.

Wrote the apostle Paul: "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31, NIV). AT

[1] For example, see the Calvinist-Reformed *Westminster Confession of Faith* (19:1-19:5), Lutheran *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* (s.7), Anglican *Thirty-Nine Articles* (cl.VIII), and Catholic *Summa Theologica* (cl.I-II).
[2] Roy E. Gane, *The Role of God's Moral Law, Including Sabbath, in the New Covenant* (2003), p. 7.
[3] To borrow a phrase from French sociologist Émile Durkheim.
[4] Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times* (Nov. 25, 1880).
[5] ibid.

Climate change is one of the great existential threats that our generation, and those to come, will face. Its effects threaten to worsen poverty and inequality and to cause widespread instability in our shared global security. These terrible consequences have been caused or severely worsened by human actions, a sinful disregard for created life and the ecosystems that support them.[1]

More Than an Afterthought?
Adventists Addressing Climate Change

BY MATTHEW KORPMAN

Although the largest industrial nations have caused the most harm to the ecology of Earth, the smallest and poorest of nations suffer the worst effects of the climate crisis. Due to the significant moral issues involved in this problem, religious bodies have responded in various ways to the issue, recognizing the urgency of addressing the crisis while time remains.

The Roman Catholic Church

We begin with a short look at the Roman Catholic Church, the largest Christian communion in the world. It has published a number of works on the climate crisis,[2] but the most influential at present is Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*.[3] In it he argues that all humans have a moral obligation to care for the issue, and he provides a diverse theological rationale for his position while appealing to world governments to enact policies that prevent the crisis.

Pope Francis' book has been a loud cry to religious leaders, not only within the Catholic church, but also in other Christian bodies. In its second chapter, "The Gospel of Creation," he draws extensively on Scripture[4] to lay out a theological argument for the interconnectedness of all creation. In line with Catholic thinking that the Word of God encompasses more than the Bible, the pope also draws on church tradition and other papal statements, appealing to Saint Francis of Assisi and dozens of other figures in Christian history. The selection of voices helps to demonstrate that Pope Francis considers the issue of climate change important enough to merit the full support of Catholic resources.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church

By contrast, official statements of the Seventh-day Adventist Church indicate less commitment to the issue of climate change. Between 1992 and 2015, the denomination released five statements related to the topic of the environment.[5] These statements make tangible claims in terms of practical policy affirmations, theology, and morality. In terms of policy, the church has advocated for "significantly" reducing CO_2 emissions, calling on world governments to honor the Rio de Janeiro agreement, to discuss more aggressive actions (1995b), and to support the Paris Climate Accords (2015).[6] Theologically, it argues that human beings are tasked by God to be stewards of creation (1995a, 1996) and that any failure to do so is linked with Adam and Eve's initial disobedience and represents the effect of sin (1992, 1995a). Morally, the church hints in its statements that first-world nations carry a moral imperative to tackle this issue, because the effects of climate change are mostly generated by such nations (due to greed and consumerism) and yet will be felt first by smaller and poorer nations (1992, 1995b).

Intriguingly, in all five statements only one biblical reference is cited, a phenomenon curiously different from other faith statements issued by the church, in which biblical texts are consistently cited. In 1992, the church's first statement quotes from Scripture once (Rev. 14:7; 11:17-18) and alludes to three other Bible passages (Gen. 1:26; 2:1-4, Ex. 20:8-11; Gen. 3:20).[7] In June-July of 1995, the church's second statement quotes no Bible verses but alludes to Gen 1:26.[8] That same year, in December, a third statement from the General Conference makes no biblical reference or allusion. In 1996, ADCOM released another statement, which though quoting no Scripture, again alludes to Genesis 1:26. During the Paris Climate Accords in 2015, the church republished its 1995 statement and again alluded to Genesis 1:26 in its preamble.

The Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, located at Andrews University, has released a number of theological statements for the benefit of the church's research. Although it has published entire pieces on the issues of homosexuality and women's ordination, the seminary has never produced a similar-length study on the issue of climate change.

"A Statement on the Biblical Doctrine of Creation," voted by the seminary faculty in 2010, spends 13 pages examining and arguing against the issue of theistic evolution and only one page at the end affirming environmentalism (with no mention of the current dangers of climate change). In reference to environmentalism, the document states: "As Christians, we have a thrilling cause or mission, which is to restore, to the extent possible, the glory of God in all His creation, here and now."[9] It also argues that as policy, "our economic goals should be subservient to a responsible use of the resources God has provided."[10] Despite the shortcoming of its length and lack of interaction with current scientific discussions, it does slightly expand the biblical and theological references, quoting the law of Jubilee, found in Lev 25:1-7, as evidence of the desire for God to give the land its own Sabbath rest.

Among the 28 fundamental beliefs that are said to reflect the church's present understanding of its central theology, the sixth on Creation makes only a brief mention of care for the environment, as an afterthought to the more pressing concerns of the historicity of the Genesis account and the literal 24-hour time frame of a recent Creationist interpretation. Although a number of texts could inform a more robust view of environmentalism, many of which Pope Francis utilized in his encyclical, this fundamental belief directly cites only Genesis 1:26-28 as a theological foundation.

When this fundamental belief was edited recently to emphasize more strongly the belief in a recent creation, no changes were made to grow the theology surrounding environmentalism.

Ironically, compared to the statements by the Roman Catholic Church, the Seventh-day Adventist Church appears to have the less biblically informed view of climate change and environmental stewardship. Outside of allusions from Genesis 1 and 2 for establishing human stewardship and memorialized Sabbath rest, and from Genesis 3 for the origin of pollution within "the Fall," the only non-Genesis reference utilized in an official statement by the church is a quote from Revelation that consists of merely a summarized version of the Genesis 1 and 2 texts.

In other words, the full extent of the denomination's biblical foundation for care of the environment is limited primarily to the Creation stories, or texts related to those two stories, and nothing else.

Does this suggest that the world church, which historically bases itself on the Bible, provides mere lip service to these issues? A lack of commitment is perhaps confirmed by the fact that since its first statement in 1992, the denomination has never attempted to push for an environmental-themed campaign of education for its Sabbath School curriculum. Most Adventists would never hear of climate change within their Seventh-day Adventist context, suggesting that there is a strong disconnect between what the church leadership wishes and what the actual membership perceives as Adventist belief and mission.

The consequences of this deficient theology may be seen in the number of conservative groups within the denomination who have set themselves firmly against the church's position, arguing that climate change is a deception of the end times and, more importantly, is unbiblical. An example of one such group would be Walter Veith's Amazing Discoveries. Playing on the anti-Catholic bias that Adventism has historically held, these groups

cite Pope Francis' writings on the topic as an example of why Adventists should oppose this effort. Although such groups have begun to spread their conspiracies online, garnering hundreds of thousands of views, the church has made no official move to respond or to combat such efforts.

It appears that given the historic Adventist attitude of political neutrality and the lack of biblical argumentation, the church's official efforts to affect climate change at the governmental level have been undermined by its lack of focused energy directed at the church membership. In a paper examining the church's various statements, presented in 2014 at the Adventist Society for Religious Studies, Ben Holdsworth noted something about the statement issued Dec. 19, 1995, that in truth can be applied to all. He said that it "falls short on climate engagement" and is "directed towards governments being called to action—not church entities or members."[11] Even though each statement affirms what Adventists as members are supposed to believe (i.e., stewardship, conservation, etc.), and despite references to communal and individual actions, the specific actions they call for are directed toward policymakers rather than church members. Members are not even urged to advocate for their governments to enact such work but, rather, are bypassed with direct appeals to governmental entities.

Misplaced Focus?

Religious communities are most effective in their climate goals when they robustly connect those goals with their theological foundations. On the other hand, when a religious community seeks to pursue a goal without connecting it to its theological foundation, such efforts fall short of its goal and indicate a potential lack of vision or commitment to that goal.

The Adventist church's lack of biblical engagement on this issue may in part be due to a misplaced focus on appealing to governments, rather than a dual focus on the mutual engagement of church membership and political appeals. For now, the church's administration appears to be having an insider conversation through their statements, rather than specifically broadening the dialogue to involve the entire church membership.

Likewise, the fact that environmentalism was treated as a tacked-on, one-page supplementary discussion to the seminary's statement on Creation indicates that this is not as important a theological issue as official statements suggest it should be.

Going forward, the world church would benefit from a direct appeal to church members regarding climate crisis, a more robust theological treatment of the topic, and renewed focus on Creation beyond the debate over evolution. If Adventism cares about the environment to the extent that its statements seem to imply, the church must connect environmentalism to its very namesake. It may need to edit the sixth fundamental belief to emphasize environmentalism and climate change, so that the practical beliefs outweigh the more theoretical (such as concern with evolution). The church could reinforce its claim that Sabbath observance connects Adventism to environmentalism, developing a theological vision that invites members to protest and advocate on behalf of the climate crisis, just as Adventists once supported legally enforced temperance initiatives in the 19th century.

Likewise, the North American Division could take active steps to connect its Adventist churches with environmental causes, recognizing the important role that it plays in producing tangible action. To the extent that it is already doing so, it needs to do a better job at advertising its efforts—not hiding its light under a bushel, but letting it shine brightly for others to see.

At the most recent 2021 meeting of the Adventist Society for Religious Studies, many scholars, including myself, gathered in San Antonio, Texas, to address the issue of ecology and the Adventist need to engage more substantively with the topic. I hope this is the beginning of a trend in Adventism. Given the church's large global membership (over 20 million), such a trend would impact the world as a whole. AT

[1] Special thanks to Gregory Mobley of Andover Newton at Yale Divinity School, whose class on Creation and the Hebrew Bible was a wonderful catalyst for this article.
[2] See Bruce Lieberman, "The Catholic Church and Climate Change," *Yale Climate Connections* (Feb. 14, 2012).
[3] Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (2015).
[4] Genesis 1:26, 28, 31; 2:2-3, 15; 3:17-19; 4:9-11; 6:5-6,13; Exodus 16:23; 20:10; 23:12; Leviticus 19:9-10; 25:1-6, 10, 23; Deuteronomy 10:14; 22:4, 6; Psalms 24:1; 33:6; 104:31; 136:6; 148:3-6; Proverbs 3:19; 22:2; Isaiah 40:28b-29; Jeremiah 1:5; 32:17, 21; Matthew 5:45; 6:26; 8:27; 11:19, 25; 13:31-32; 20:25-26; Mark 6:3; Luke 12:6; John 1:1-18; 4:35; Colossians 1:16, 19-20; 1 Corinthians 15:28; Revelation 15:3; and the deuterocanonical Wisdom of Solomon 6:7; 11:24, 26.
[5] General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee voted "Caring for the Environment" on Oct. 12, 1992. The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee voted then released "Environment" June 29-July 8, 1995, followed by "The Dangers of Climate Change" on Dec. 19, 1995, and "Stewardship of the Environment" Oct. 1-10, 1996.
[6] "Seventh-day Adventists Reaffirm Commitment to Preserving the Environment: Encourage All Members to Be Good Stewards," Adventist News Network (Dec. 3, 2015).
[7] Statements of allusion include: "God set aside the seventh-day Sabbath…," "The human decision to disobey God…," and "we confirm our stewardship of God's creation."
[8] Statements include: "humankind was created in the image of God, thus representing God as His stewards, to rule the natural environment in a faithful and fruitful way."
[9] "A Statement on the Biblical Doctrine of Creation," Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary Andrews University (Apr. 30, 2010), p. 12.
[10] ibid.
[11] Ben Holdsworth, "Rethinking Adventist Ecclesiology for a Climate-Impacted World," Adventist Society of Religious Studies (Nov. 20, 2014), p. 3.

WHO FIXES THE EARTH, AND HOW?

REVELATION 21:1-4 & ISAIAH 11:6-9

By Olive J. Hemmings

The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. … They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain.
–Isaiah 11:6-9, NRSV

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
"See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."
–Revelation 21:1-4, NRSV

Both of these passages, one in the Old Testament and the other in the New, are used by Christians to describe a new world after this world is over. But they are quite different from one another.

Revelation is cosmic in scope, envisioning a demolished and reconstructed Earth, literally a new creation. The prophet describes this new Earth as a city, Jerusalem, since the early church ministered largely in urban centers.

Isaiah, on the other hand, had envisioned a socio-political order in Judah in which God's covenant of justice is the foundation. This new order is rural, since ancient Judah, Israel, and the surrounding nations were agrarian economies.

Though Isaiah's vision hasn't the scope of John's, they are fundamentally similar in that they articulate the hope that humanity ceases the predatory mode of existence that creates so much suffering for all of creation. But they differ in that one appears to expect God's people to restore Earth, and the other anticipates that God will start over when his people are sufficiently responsible.

Similar Concerns

Parts of Revelation 21:1-4 appear to be borrowed from Isaiah 65:17-19: "See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. … I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more" (NIV).

John employs the coded language of apocalyptic literature, while Isaiah calls corrupt kings and nations and the various behaviors in a corrupt culture by their real names, not by code. In Revelation, the prophet John envisions a cosmic "new heaven" and "new earth," while Isaiah envisions a *nonpredatory* political, social, and economic climate, in which the "wolf shall live with the lamb." Unlike Revelation, Isaiah's "new heaven and a new earth" has death, albeit death that comes after a full life span (verse 20) in a utopian society where people do not die from lack of proper nourishment, healthcare, or housing (verses 19b-22).

John's new Jerusalem comes down out of heaven; in Isaiah, it springs from the earth. The literary context indicates that Isaiah lays the responsibility squarely upon Judah's choice to follow the just requirements of God's covenant that safeguards the well-being of the powerless and the vulnerable within the culture (Isaiah 1-2).

Revelation appears at first glance to leave the burden upon God's shoulders to purge Earth—with fire—of unrighteous people and the taint of sin and to start all over. However, a closer reading of Revelation in its deep socio-political context reveals that it *does* call for responsibility: it calls for the saints to worship the only sovereign over creation, not the Roman emperor and his "image." It calls the saints to come out of Babylon (in this context, referring to the Roman Empire) and resist its corrupting influence: "Here is a call for the *endurance* of the saints…" (Rev. 14:12, NRSV, emphasis mine). The word "endurance," from the Greek *hupomone*, does not mean to passively wait (as we sometimes preach today), but to actively resist the injustice and voracious consumerism of ancient Rome and refuse to participate in it. Do not "drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" (Rev. 14:8, NRSV).

So, Revelation and Isaiah address the same concerns but solve them in quite different ways.

Messianic Future

The Messianic future is a hope for a justly governed society and a *shalom* community here and now. Isaiah's utterance about a new Earth in 11:6-9 begins in verse 1: "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots" (NRSV). This is one of several Messianic projections by Isaiah.

The Old Testament Messianic ideals differ from what Christians now understand Messiah to be. The Old Testament prophets did not see their oracles extending beyond the kingdom of Israel. All references to a future utopia are to a just reign over the covenant community. Our applications of these to the present time are secondary applications—a hermeneutic approach developed by the early church with an eye toward the coming of Jesus. In the prophetic oracles such as Isaiah, the Messiah is a monarch who administers God's just purposes according to the covenant.

Even Cyrus of Persia is said to be Yahweh's Messiah in Isaiah 45:1, because this monarch of the Persian Empire will initiate the restoration of a Judah left ravished by the Babylonian invasion.

The word we translate Messiah, from the Hebrew *Mashiaḥ*, means "anointed." Once a king is anointed to the throne, he is the *Mashiaḥ* over the land, and he is expected to administer God's covenant of justice by making sure that the nation does not follow the idolatrous ways of Gentiles.

Among other things, Gentiles do not acknowledge one sovereign and one humanity, with responsibility to protect all lives and life forms and to create a *shalom* community. That the covenant community does this is expressed, among other places, in Deuteronomy 15, where an economic Sabbath—every "week of years"—is the basis for canceling all debts and setting free all slaves.

The Messianic oracles usually come in the midst of a crisis in Judah, such as the encroachment of the Assyrians upon Judaic territory. Here Isaiah utters a Messianic oracle, which he describes to be a sign to King Ahaz that he need not fear the threat of Assyria: "Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel (Isa. 7:14, NRSV).

Even Cyrus of Persia is said to be Yahweh's Messiah in Isaiah 45:1, because this monarch of the Persian Empire will initiate the restoration of a Judah left ravished by the Babylonian invasion.

So, while the prophet Isaiah envisions an ideal world, his vision isn't the same as John's. His is Messianic: a vision of a just agrarian world in the ancient Near East where human relations cease to be predatory, beginning with the nation of

Judah. He describes it as a world in which predatory creatures retire their fangs: "The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. … They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain" (Isa. 11:6-9, NRSV).

Apocalyptic Prophecy

Apocalypse, from the word *apokalupsis,* simply means "revelation." In its simplest expression, an apocalypse is exposure of the demonic forces behind the socio-political injustice and suffering in the world, pulling off the veil from what parades as religious piety.

This kind of discourse cloaks a political critique of things as they exist in the specific socio-political context from which they emerge. As Paula Fredriksen says, "apocalypses cloak a political critique."[1] Like Isaiah, John's vision calls out corrupt monarchs and religious systems, but he clothes his castigation in symbols.

The apocalyptic genre emerged after the collapse of Jerusalem with the Babylonian invasion in 586 BCE. "It is no small wonder," says Fredriksen, "that apocalyptic literature flourished in the troubled period between the Maccabees and Bar Kochba" using its "esoteric symbolism" to cloak its political critique. It is heavily coded due to the brutal consequence of overt resistance. For instance, Rome, like ancient Babylon, destroyed the Holy City of Jerusalem in 70 CE, so John's readers know what he refers to when he writes of "Babylon."

The socio-political contexts of the two major apocalypses in the Protestant canon are deeply religious. In Daniel it emerges from a powerful pagan empire that forces its religiosity upon God's people. In the New Testament, it is the Roman Empire, with a Caesar who calls himself "Son of God" and demands that everyone worship him and "his image" or be persecuted.

Perhaps it is time we take a break from our upward gaze toward redemption and look inward to the places where we encounter ourselves and our fellow creatures.

Predatory Humanity

Humans are the most predatory among Earth's creatures. Humanity preys not only upon the subordinate creation, but also upon its own, wreaking social, psychological, and environmental havoc.

This is, of course, the result of sin. God's command to humanity pre-Fall to subdue the world collides into the post-Fall state, where it morphs into a hideous spirit of domination that sometimes hides behind a mask of godliness. Nations prey upon nations; one race, one nation preys upon the other; trees and animals endangered for human consumption fall under our vanity, greed, and covetousness. And then there is the agelong gender domination war of resistance and counter-resistance with the great world religious systems, and Christian denominations egging it on and thus creating dangerous—often subtly so—gender-specific predators. How do we get out of this karmic cycle of death?

Isaiah's vision signals hope that it need not be so: "The wolf and the lamb will live together…a child shall lead them." The Isaiah oracle begins by pulling away the mask of godliness. It refers to the religious community, Judah, as Sodom and Gomorrah, a well-known code for cruel, predatory cities (1:10). And it channels divine dismissal of the religious assemblies and rituals and calls, instead, for justice (1:11-20). This sets the stage for the entire oracle as it upbraids corrupt kings and oppressive monarchies (see, for example, 9:8-21; 10:1-19; 13; 15-17; 19) and calls for the inclusion of those who, by ritual purity, are excluded from the congregation: eunuchs and Gentiles (Isaiah 56).

So, the text is not referring to the new Earth of John's vision, but to a new religious and political order that focuses on the well-being of the creation. In Isaiah, God disdains rituals and ceremonies that camouflage evil—"What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?" (1:11, NRSV)—and statutes that are predatory (10:1-2).

Isaiah functioned as prophet in a dog-eat-dog world, and God's people got caught in the rat race for survival, rather than trust that Israel's example of justice would cause it to prosper and lead the nations in just practices. This first section leading up to the utterance in Isaiah 11:1 comes against the castigation of Judah's unrighteousness and stands as a messianic promise of how they can live in peace *if*[2] they practice justice (verses 1-9).

While the end in Revelation is cosmic in its scope, bringing in an Earth spiritually cleansed of the demonic forces behind the injustice and suffering, Isaiah points to a geopolitical transformation, a return to the covenant by which God joins all creatures as one through human responsibility.

Taking Responsibility

Mahatma Gandhi said: "When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall. Think of it—always."

Gandhi's statement is the thesis of almost every apocalyptic discourse. In apocalypse, the wicked fall once and for all. But from where we stand today, in a history far removed from the historical provenance of Judeo-Christian apocalypse, it seems hard to sustain Gandhi's vision of love and truth winning out, whether in religious institutions or civil society. For thousands of years now, the expected end has been immediate, "even at the door."

Still, hope for the transformation of a vicious world continues to fuel Judeo-Christian apocalypse. Fredriksen argues that the apocalyptic description of a joyful and very near future is fueled by the irredeemably horrific present.[3] And up until today, each time the crises pile on, groups and individuals alike look to every radical social or environmental phenomenon as a sign of a cosmic end.

Are these two visions mutually exclusive? Isaiah's utopia is yet to be seen in any major political or even religious system. But can the new Jerusalem of Revelation 21 come down out of heaven without first rising up from Earth?

Perhaps it is time we take a break from our upward gaze toward redemption and look inward to the places where we encounter ourselves and our fellow creatures. For it is in these inward places that God dwells, waiting and suffering with us until we all join hands in the pledge to leave this world better than when we came. In Isaiah's vision, this seems to be the way toward the new Jerusalem. It will come down out of heaven, but we must march toward it from the spaces where we encounter creation. AT

[1] Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ* (1988), p. 82.
[2] All of the messianic prophecies are conditional prophecies. They come to pass only as God's people are faithful to the covenant.
[3] Fredriksen, p. 82.

Stewardship: More Than Tithe and Offerings

BY CHERRI-ANN FARQUHARSON

Two creation accounts are recorded at the beginning of Genesis. Humanity's relationship to the rest of life on Earth is described in chapter 1 with the words "dominion" and "subdue."

"And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and *subdue* it: and have *dominion* over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:28, KJV, emphasis mine).

Yet when the Creation account is repeated in Genesis 2, it describes humanity's relationship using the words "dress" and "keep."

"And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to *dress* it and to *keep* it" (Gen. 2:15, KJV, emphasis mine).

Why are the tasks different in the second telling?

Many stories are repeated in the Bible—note, for example, the repetitions in the four Gospels. I would suggest that the second telling clarifies the responsibilities given in the first. That is, the two accounts are not contradictory, but complementary: "dominion" and "subdue" in Genesis 1 should be interpreted in light of "dress" and "keep" in chapter 2, words that suggest not exploitation of creation for personal gain, but care and control of it for the good of many.

If we are to occupy until Jesus comes, we need a planet to occupy. Yes, the Lord is returning, but to quote an old Adventist hymn, "We know not the hour of the Master's appearing."

A parent or guardian's responsibility to a child is one of care and control. The person with resources and authority is held liable for the dependent's well-being—or lack thereof, if the child is deemed to have been neglected or hurt or has experienced other forms of improper treatment. Similarly, a driver is to be in care and control of a motor vehicle and is therefore expected to use the vehicle as intended and not to cause harm to persons or property.

Elsewhere, using the word "stewardship," the Bible describes this notion of care and control for the good of others. A steward, as we know from Jesus' parables, is a person who acts as the surrogate to manage the affairs of another. In the Gospels we see stewards managing property, financial affairs, or an entire estate.

The *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* says that Christians are God's stewards—that is, we are surrogates entrusted with managing his property in harmony with biblical guidelines and principles.[1]

Yet, stewardship in the denominational conversation has never gone much beyond how you manage your money and your time so that you can give a portion to the church. While the church manual admits that our responsibility as stewards encompasses the "proper care and use of the body, mind, time, abilities, spiritual gifts, relationships, influence, language, *the environment*, and material possessions,"[2] this isn't reflected on the Stewardship Ministries webpage of the world church (stewardship.adventist.org), which focuses entirely on tithes and offerings.

Climate Stewardship

Humans have built our economies and our lives on fossil fuels ever since the Industrial Revolution. The system is wasteful, polluting, and dominated by a few powerful players. Due to the physical and psychological distance between communities and each precise location where energy comes from, many of us don't realize the environmental cost. After all, oil fields and refineries are offshore or in remote locations, and electricity flows from one large power station to thousands of customers.

Yet it can't stay hidden forever. The increase in greenhouse gas emissions is an inevitable result of the internal combustion engine cars and thermal power plants that dominate our transportation and electricity sectors. Coal, oil, and natural gas accounted for 99.3% of CO_2 emissions in 2018.[3]

When it gets cold outside, you may hear people say: "Look at this weather! Global warming? I don't think so!" This is a misunderstanding born out of ignorance. Weather is the state of the climate system (rainfall, temperature, wind speed, etc.) at a specific time and place—a snapshot of the atmospheric system. Climate change is about distinct changes in these atmospheric measures lasting for a significant period of time, such as a baseline of 15-30 years.

Even those who are suspicious of manmade climate change will admit to having observed changes in the weather over a lifetime: heatwaves, heavy rains, droughts, tornados, hurricanes, and cyclones. Some changes in climate can be attributed to natural variations or volcanic eruptions, but the rate at which changes are occurring, as seen against the backdrop of centuries of climate observations, is unprecedented.[4] No longer is there any serious doubt that humanity has warmed the atmosphere, ocean, and land.

Small island developing states in the Caribbean, the Pacific, the Atlantic, the Indian Ocean, and the South China Sea—places with beautiful beaches that many Westerners like to visit for vacation—contribute less than 1 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions. But because they're located in the tropics and are surrounded by water, these nations are the most vulnerable to climate change.[5] In the Caribbean, where I work as an energy consultant, nations are threatened by rising sea levels and increasingly severe extreme weather events.[6] Underscoring the economic, physical, and social vulnerability of this region is the fact that the 2017 Atlantic hurricane season recorded a total of 17 named storms, of which 10 were hurricanes and six intensified to major hurricanes, with some occurring before June 1, the usual start of each hurricane season.[7]

Faith Communities and Climate

On Oct. 5, 2021, leaders representing the world's major religious groups joined scientists at the Vatican to call on the international community to step up their climate action ahead of the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties, which was held in November in Glasgow. The leaders agreed that our spiritualities teach a duty to care for the human family and for the environment in which it lives. "We are not limitless masters of our planet and its resources," they said, but "caretakers of the natural environment" for future generations, and it is "time to take transformative action" together.[8]

Our church, which is one of the fastest-growing Christian denominations, didn't lend its voice to this global appeal for environmental stewardship, as you will read in Matthew Korpman's report in this issue. While our denomination has a strong commitment to a theology of Creation and has made a few statements on the matter, it has failed to join the world community in full-throated support.

Nothing in the statement these religious leaders delivered to the 2021 Climate Change Conference in Glasgow conflicts with our beliefs. But fear of a loss of our unique identity has long kept our leaders from taking part in ecumenical opportunities. Are we so afraid of working with other churches that we're willing to remain silent?

An Environmental NEWSTART

Nutrition: Reduce our consumption of meat, which requires significant water resources to produce and emits methane, a major greenhouse gas.

Exercise: Utilize every opportunity to walk and ride nonmotorized cycles rather drive in fossil fuel-powered vehicles.

Water: Conserve water, in recognition of the scarcity of the resource in many parts of the world due to droughts.

Sunshine: Use natural lighting and renewable energy devices derived from the sun's energy whenever possible.

Temperance: Use natural resources responsibly, and give back to the planet at least as much as you take.

Air: Preserve the freshness of the air by choosing energy sources that do not emit harmful greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere.

Rest: Prioritize daily rest and weekly Sabbath rest to allow the land around you time to heal.

Trust in God: Trust that the Master of this Earth is returning and expects to find his servants faithful!

–Cherri-Ann Farquharson

If we are to occupy until Jesus comes, we need a planet to occupy. Yes, the Lord is returning, but to quote an old Adventist hymn, "We know not the hour of the Master's appearing."[9] Until that day, like the servants in the parable, who were given talents to care and control on behalf of their master, the divine counsel is that as stewards of Earth, we are to "be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2, KJV).

How, then, should people have dominion, subdue, dress, keep, care for, and control Earth? We must make choices that allow us to live within nature's budget of renewable resources at rates of natural replenishment. AT

[1] *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 19th edition, revised and updated (2016), p. 136.
[2] ibid., p. 102.
[3] International Energy Agency, "Key World Energy Statistics 2020," (2020).
[4] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "Summary for Policymakers," *AR6 Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis* (2021).
[5] Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, "Small Island Developing States in Numbers: Climate Change Edition 2015" (2015), p. 6.
[6] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, "Climate Change: Small Island Developing States" (2005).
[7] Climate Studies Group Mona (Eds.), "The State of the Caribbean Climate" (2020).
[8] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, "World Religious Leaders and Scientists Make pre-COP26 Appeal" (Oct. 5, 2021).
[9] Franklin Edson Belden, a nephew of Ellen G. White, wrote this hymn based on Matthew 24:36, 42.

"WELL, THERE'S THAT..."

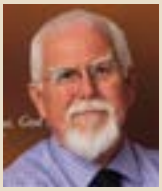
By Nate Hellman

BIBLE CREDITS

Contributors

ELLE BERRY is a writer and nutritionist. She is passionate about creating wellness, maintaining a bottomless cup of tea, and exploring every beautiful vista in the Pacific Northwest. She blogs at ChasingWhippoorwills.com.

MELISSA BROTTON teaches writing and literature courses at La Sierra University. Her special areas are 19th-century British literature and religious studies. She has published on the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning and biblical ecology. She spends a lot of time outdoors, paints, and writes nature stories and poems.



STEPHEN CHAVEZ is a Seventh-day Adventist minister, retired after serving 45 years as a parish pastor and writer/editor. He lives in Silver Spring, Maryland, with his wife, Linda.

CHERRI-ANN FARQUHARSON is a certified energy manager and solar PV installer with graduate and undergraduate degrees in physics from the University of the West Indies. She is a fourth-generation Adventist who grew up in Jamaica and continues to serve the church as a part of the New Kingston Seventh-day Adventist Fellowship.

STEPHEN FERGUSON is a lawyer from Perth, Western Australia, with expertise in planning, environment, immigration, and administrative-government law. He is married to Amy and has two children, William and Eloise.

OLIVE J. HEMMINGS is a professor of religion and ethics at Washington Adventist University in Takoma Park, Maryland.

MAURY JACKSON, D.MIN., is chair of the Pastoral Studies Department and an associate professor of the HMS Richards Divinity School at La Sierra University in Riverside, California.

MATTHEW J. KORPMAN is an adjunct professor of biblical studies and theology at La Sierra University. He graduated from Yale Divinity School with a Master of Arts in Religion, Second Temple Judaism, and is completing a Ph.D. in New Testament from the University of Birmingham. He wrote the popular *Saying No to God: A Radical Approach to Reading the Bible Faithfully.* His website is www.matthewjkorpman.com.

LINDSEY ABSTON PAINTER is a mental health trainer living in Northern California. She is passionate about feminism, social justice, and sci-fi. She is a proud parent and has way too many cats and one goofy dog.

LOREN SEIBOLD is the executive editor of *Adventist Today.*

EDITORIAL PHILOSOPHY

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or the editorial board. One of the purposes of this magazine is to encourage dialogue between those of differing viewpoints within the Adventist Church. Thus, we will publish articles ranging throughout the conservative-liberal continuum.

The results of our 2021 year-end fundraiser are in!

The global *Adventist Today* family came together to give more than $138,000, setting a new organization record for year-end giving.

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- Your generosity means we can pursue international growth, funding content in Spanish and Portuguese. It's high time that *Adventist Today* expand its footprint, especially in areas such as Latin America, where church membership is rapidly growing.
- This outpouring of support means we can overhaul our **atoday.org** website, making it more user-friendly.

You make all of this (and more) possible. We can't overstate how incredibly grateful we are for your support. We love that you stand with us during our spring, summer, and year-end fundraisers as well as through your regular monthly giving. Together, we can boldly call for a more authentic, generous faith and a willingness to talk about even the toughest topics.

Thank you for helping us encourage the best of Adventism.

Your immensely grateful *Adventist Today* fundraising director,
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