



encounter

**'Isms' all around  
– but why do they matter to me?**



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## encounter magazine in 2010 – celebrating 30 years!

**Encounter** magazine began life in 1980, so, by our calculations, that makes 2010 **encounter's** 30 year anniversary!

Our editions next year will be looking back over the past 30 years, and if you have any memories of **encounter** through the years, we would love to hear from you. Have you read an **encounter** article that has really impressed you and helped you develop in your relationship with God and others? Or have you any suggestions about the direction you would like to see the magazine moving in as we embark on the next 30 years? Perhaps you could ask your parents or other family members if they have any memories of **encounter** from their younger days? Email all your comments, suggestions or photos to: [encounter@adventist.org.uk](mailto:encounter@adventist.org.uk)



Vol. 5 Issue 4 Editor Des Boldeau • Co-editor Natalie Davison  
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When Pastor Boldeau suggested the title of 'Isms and Schisms' for this edition, I confess that I had no idea what he meant. But after I had a closer look at the most well-known 'isms' the penny began to drop. We have tried to cover the 'isms' in this issue which you may well have come across: secularism, post-modernism, capitalism and racism, among others. You might see them in news broadcasts or hear about them in lectures at school/college. You may even discuss some aspects of them with your friends or at church. Some you may not even have heard of before now, let alone spoken about. But that's OK. We hope you discover something new by reading these articles or at least gain a greater knowledge of some of the most commonplace 'isms' and how they can affect you as young Christians.

And check out some weird and wonderful 'isms' which are on pages 20 and 21 – one of which is eidolism – a belief in ghosts. The Bible mentions a few instances of eidolism: King Saul and the Witch of Endor (1 Sam. 28:8) and the disciples believing that Jesus was a ghost when he reappeared after his resurrection (Luke 24:37). What's your take on it?

All our regular articles are here and we also have some reports on autumn events which took place in the NEC recently. And last but not least, the results of our **encounter** photo competition are on pages 12 and 13. Congratulations to winners Jennie Hall and Carl Jeffers and thank you to everyone who voted for them on the BUC youth web page.

For all your comments and suggestions, please email us at [encounter@adventist.org.uk](mailto:encounter@adventist.org.uk) or you can comment on our Facebook page – search for: **encounter magazine**.

And finally, I hope that you each find the time to step off the hectic merry-go-round we find ourselves on, particularly at this time of year, to consider the beautiful and precious gift of a baby born in a mucky stable filled with noisy animals and visited by, let's face it, whiffy shepherds. The circumstances were odd to say the least, but as the A-team used to say: 'I love it when a plan comes together!' The Master Planner was in control then and is still in control now. I wish you all a peaceful and love-filled Christmas and a blessed New Year.

• Natalie



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## Hitchhiking through the Gospel

Just recently I was in an IKEA store doing a little shopping. They had a bookshelf full of second-hand books to which people could help themselves and make a donation to Children in Need. On the shelf I noticed a copy of *The Beginner's Bible* but this one was in Chinese and English. I pointed it out to my two girls because they had recently been to Kids' Church where they had learned all about the Bible and seen it in various languages. A lady next to me, who heard me tell the girls about the Chinese book, got very excited and told me about her Chinese granddaughter. However, the excitement vanished instantly when I offered her the Bible and said she could have it.

But that is not the response that the Bible is supposed to get, is it? After all, it's supposed to be about good news, isn't it?

I suspect that there are aspects of the Gospel that you are all very familiar with: that the cry of the first angel is that we are to preach it to all the world and that it is good news. But in a world wrecked by evil, global warming, recession and war, what's so great about the Gospel?

Well, for those of us growing up in the Adventist Church, getting the answer to this question is a bit like the journey of the main characters in Douglas Adams' book *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Here Arthur and Ford Prefect are seeking the answer to the meaning of life by travelling the galaxy and in the end finding that the answer is



really quite simple and yet profound! Unfortunately, some of us never seem to find the answer. Paul's journey was very similar to that of our two hitchhikers. He woke up one morning to a day when his life was profoundly changed on the road to Damascus. He went from persecuting the Christian Church to being its biggest champion, and the reason is simply that he discovered what the good news of Jesus Christ was really about. All his life he had been working to be perfect, to keep the rules of the Jewish faith (of which there are a lot) and stay perfect until the Messiah came to free the Jewish nation.

The apostle Paul who wrote many of the letters of the New Testament made a huge impact when he wrote his letter to the Romans. That impact was not only made on the Christian believers in that city but on Christians since that time. Martin Luther called it *'the daily bread of the soul'*<sup>1</sup> and suggested that we should spend time with it every day. It is in Romans that Paul makes a fantastic statement: *'I am not ashamed of the gospel,*

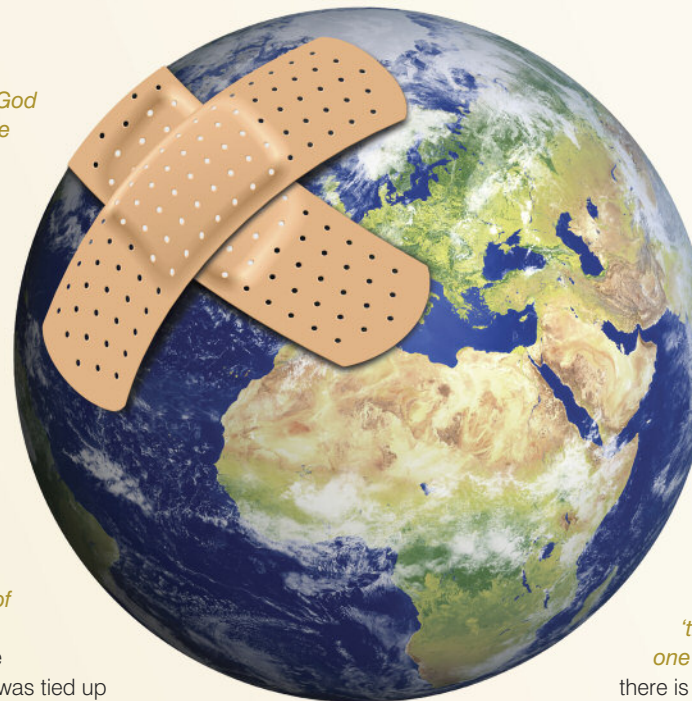
• **Douglas McCormac**  
Pastor of Southampton, Totton & Winchester churches

*because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."'*<sup>2</sup> In an earlier verse we learn what the Gospel is about and how Paul feels about God: *'... whom I so love to worship and serve by spreading the good news of his Son – the Message!'*<sup>3</sup>

For Paul, the Gospel, the Message, the Good News, was tied up in the person of Jesus Christ, and this was the *'... extraordinary Message of God's powerful plan to rescue everyone who trusts him ...'*<sup>4</sup>. The first thing about the Gospel is that when sin entered this world there was a plan – a plan of salvation! This plan was to restore the same relationship that Adam and Eve had had with God, so that humanity might be brought back into that right relationship.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:3: *'The first thing I did was place before you what was placed so emphatically before me: that the Messiah died for our sins, exactly as Scripture tells it; that he was buried; that he was raised from death on the third day'*<sup>5</sup>. This is the plan being enacted: from the time sin entered this world, everything in the plan of salvation revolved around an event, an event that would seal the fate of all those who believed! A fate so wonderful it is beyond anything that we could imagine.

And why was it done? *'God sacrificed Jesus on the altar of the*



*world to clear that world of sin. Having faith in him sets us in the clear. God decided on this course of action in full view of the public – to set the world in the clear with himself through the sacrifice of Jesus, finally taking care of the sins he had so patiently endured. This is not only clear, but it's now – this is current history! God sets things right. He also makes it possible for us to live in his rightness.'*<sup>6</sup>

Whichever way you look at it, the world is in big trouble, the planet is dying, and so are we. The apostle's comment in Romans that *'there is no one righteous, not even one'*<sup>7</sup> doesn't sit well with me. Except that there is a message of hope, a message that Paul says will not disappoint us, a message that is for the salvation of everyone who believes. And here's the cracking thing about it: IT'S FREE! *'Out of sheer generosity he put us in right standing with himself. A pure gift. He got us out of the mess we're in and restored us to where he always wanted us to be. And he did it by means of Jesus Christ.'*<sup>8</sup>

All this time you thought that you had to play your part, you had to live up to some unattainable standard, and yet the most wonderful thing about the Gospel, the plan of salvation, is that it is a free gift to all those who believe.

It's so remarkably simple and yet so profound. Thousands of books have been written about it, millions of sermons preached on it, and its purpose is simply this: God wants to spend eternity with you. *'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.'*<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Luther, Martin, *Preface to the Epistle to the Romans*, p 1522 • <sup>2</sup> Romans 1:16, 17, NIV • <sup>3</sup> Romans 1:9, *The Message Bible* • <sup>4</sup> Romans 1:16, *The Message Bible* • <sup>5</sup> *The Message Bible* • <sup>6</sup> Romans 3:25, 26, *The Message Bible* • <sup>7</sup> Romans 3:10, NIV • <sup>8</sup> Romans 3:24, *The Message Bible* • <sup>9</sup> John 3:16, NIV

## Be a Beacon Saturday 19 September

Blessed with a mild autumn day, in excess of 2,000 Pathfinders, Adventurers, church members, guests and representatives from the Community Services congregated together in the beautiful Winter Garden auditorium in the city of Blackpool.

After the grand ceremonial entrance, welcomes were extended to everyone, including Pastor Ian Sweeney, the president of the NEC; Des Boldeau, BUC Youth director; Pastor P. Jayaraj, Blackpool church minister; and also our special guest the Mayor of Blackpool, who was presented with a special gift by the Preston Adventurers.

'Be a Beacon' was the theme for Rally Day 2009. Under this premise Pastor Ian Sweeney preached an inspiring message full of hope. His message outlined the 'great' look that Pathfinders should aim to achieve, so that everyone around them would be able to see the greatness of God. He used the example of Kanye West's rude interruption of Taylor Swift's acceptance speech at the MTV awards and how he was rendered speechless during a Jay Leno interview when asked, 'What would your mother have said?' From this image, Pastor Sweeney created a synopsis, whereby he reminded the youth, as messengers for the Lord, that everything they do should bring attention to God. With even greater emphasis, he pointed out that our uniform in itself should always be worn in an orderly manner, because it is a beacon which draws attention to God. Pastor Sweeney stated, 'Never allow your beacon of light to go out in uniform or out of uniform.' He said that our commission as Pathfinders and Adventist youth, as with the disciples of old, is to go into the world and 'let our light shine for our God'.

The highlight of the day was the witness we conveyed as everyone paraded to the view of Blackpool Tower and to the beat of numerous drum corps. The amazement on people's faces and the questions asked by those around was an indication



### Elizabeth Harvey

of the success of our community witness, very much needed for Blackpool church which has only a handful of members. As people inquired more about our cause and purpose, it was clear that more handouts were needed with information about Pathfinders and the Seventh-day Adventist Church, also giving the address of the Blackpool church.

Bystanders Lindsay Cleary and Imeldia Maguire from Blackpool City Council were out promoting 'World Car Free Day' and 'Bikeability'. They witnessed everything and said that the Pathfinders provided a 'warm atmosphere which was spiritually uplifting'.

Furthermore, Lindsay said that the Pathfinders were 'absolutely fantastic' and asked if they could come again, because she had 'never seen so many smiling faces'.

Eager Beaver Daniel Larman from Handsworth said, 'It's fun and it's really nice because you get to march.' Adventurer Miyarah South from Pendeford said that Rally Day is 'good, fun and exciting and you get really tired on the walk'. A Pathfinder from Nottingham, Symonne Banton, said, 'It's a good way to meet people from other churches. Also it's good to catch up with old friends.'

Rally Day afternoon climaxed with the baptism of Joel Pryce (17) from Camp Hill, who decided that he wanted to be a beacon for the Lord. Escorted to the pool by his parents and members of the drum corps, he was immersed by Pastor Thomas, the NEC Pathfinder director. Joel became a living witness to every Pathfinder, Adventurer and Eager Beaver.

As the sun slowly set over Blackpool Tower and the programme drew to a close, farewells and goodbyes were said. Although this was a sad time, plans are already in place for Rally Day 2010.

**Elizabeth Harvey**, 17. Having been a Seventh-day Adventist all her life, she was baptised in 2006. She has been a member of the Great Brickkiln Street church Pathfinder club for six years and in October she was invested as a Master Guide. She is currently an Adventurer counsellor.

## NEC Youth Congress/School of the Prophets

The Resolution 09 congress was held from 22 to 25 October 2009. Over the four days nearly 200 youth/young adults aged 10 to late 30s participated in a variety of workshops with three main speakers: Pastor Jeffrey Rosario, Pastor Peter Gregory and Pastor Steve Palmer.

Each morning we would wake up early for prayer. This helped get us prepped and ready to hear more of the Word and to thank God for our progress so far.

We had seven full workshops throughout each day given by both Pastors Gregory and Rosario. Between workshops we had breakout sessions for time to reflect and socialise with each other.

On Sabbath we were doubly blessed, not only with a few birthdays but also Youth Spotlight. Those attending were able to attain a biblical understanding of how in today's society we can still live for God.

Subjects addressed included: the 2,300 day prophecy; how we as youth can live for God; questioning whether you are for God or not; sex and sexuality.

Overall, I believe the time spent learning gave me renewed passion to strengthen my personal walk with God and question whether I truly believe and what it is I say I believe.

Resolution 09 is the one event that has helped me on my journey to change and to live for God completely.

It was a wonderful experience that I will always remember and I cannot wait for the next one to happen. I pray that you will be there, too!



My time at Youth Congress was very stressful but worth it; I would not have been able to manage without God's help and the help of a very good and supportive team.

Being a programme manager, I found organising very different

from what I am normally used to. I had to think ahead of time to make sure everything was prepared for the next part of the programme, and be willing to adjust things at short notice; for example, if the cooks needed more time, youth needed longer breaks and so on. I also found that when it came to organising I needed to have my own worship before the day started because if I hadn't I would have been in a mess for the whole day and I wouldn't have been able to think straight. But I learnt as the days went on that I was not doing this work for myself, but so that

the youth would gain a blessing from what the speakers were saying and from what they learnt in the workshops. Moreover I found that doing a good job wasn't in me; it was indeed God working through me, and because of that I was able to bless others along the way. One thing I can say about God's goodness is that when you call on his name he is really there for you. Throughout the whole weekend I really held God to his Word and claimed his promises, over and over again.

Genesis 15:6-8 says: **'And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness . . .'** and praise God, he came through every single time, and I continue to hold him to his Word. And you all should, too. I am more than happy that God was able to use me in a way I have never been used before and to bless others. And I am looking forward to him using me again and blessing others also.

**Kerith Martin**

**Nordia J.R. Banton**

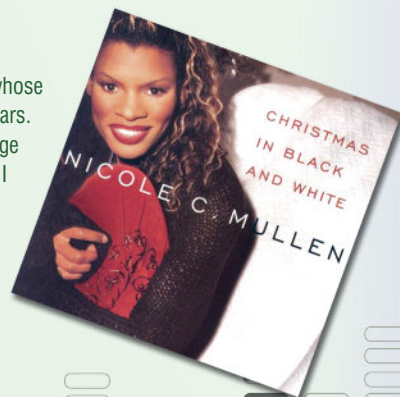
• Mark Walmsley

Ho! ho! ho! It's nearly Christmas and although I know you have extremely good taste when it comes to buying presents, allow me to point you in the right direction for my presents this year. I want: 1. A Ferrari 456 GT for during the nighttime. 2. An Aston Martin for the daytime. 3. A Porsche 911 for . . . <due to length of list – some items are not being displayed> 717,735. A chocolate orange. 717,736. A new mug. As you can probably tell, I suffer badly from ME-ism and I WANT-ism, but life is not really all about me; in fact one man born in a manger many years ago said that true life can be found only through him. I believe it involves OTHERS-ism, which is one of the isms it's OK to have. So my gift to you is 3 highly recommended songs, 2 turtle doves (Sorry! – couldn't afford the partridge or the pear tree). But here are 3 Christmas crackers! (Doves in post – honest.)



At No. 3 'Evergreen' by Switchfoot. Every year we go through Christmas being a little kinder to those around us because it's 'the season of goodwill', but just like a deciduous tree drops its leaves, we become our old selves soon after the Christmas break. Switchfoot would say though – 'be like the Christmas tree, be evergreen'. They sing, 'All that I knew, and all that I know found itself under Your reign, I want to be evergreen, This time around, I want to be evergreen, I want to live all year round'. What a cool concept; a whole year of goodwill! Ten points to Switchfoot!

At No 2 some urban pop (resembling Leona Lewis) from Nicole C. Mullen whose album 'Christmas In Black And White' is one of the best Christmas albums in years. (No seriously, it's that good.) The song is 'Lamb of God'. And I love the key change in this song. She sings ' . . . Oh Lamb of God, Prince of peace, What tribute shall I bring to worship thee? I have no gold to lay at your feet, so Lamb of God I offer Me.' An excellent album with more originality than most, and she still managed to capture the sound and feel of Christmas. Spine chilling!



No 1. Having searched high and low for a real Christmas cracker (that's one without a joke in the middle) I found this in the archive, a song from Audio Adrenaline who no longer exist (as a band that is). However, in my humble opinion their version of 'Little Drummer Boy' is sheer genius and by far one of the better covers of all the overplayed Christmas classics.



### Other Christmas albums:

- Mary Mary Christmas – Mary Mary
- Home for Christmas – Barlowgirl
- Wow Christmas – Various Artists
- Family Force 5 Christmas Pageant

**So having survived all the way to issue 4 (hopefully more to come from Musical Mark's Blog next year), I await my Ferrari and thank you for it, and the other gifts! Don't worry if you have nothing to give; the most valuable things you can give a person are true friendship, your time, and if you give them Christ they will gain eternal life and learn the true meaning of CHRISTmas!**

Mark Walmsley is a youth teacher at his local church and hosts two Christian shows on local radio stations: Gravity FM and Boundary Sound. His shows Save Our Souls and The Upper Room are available at: [www.gravityfm.net](http://www.gravityfm.net) and [www.boundariesound.co.uk](http://www.boundariesound.co.uk)



## A Letter from Peru

• Joanna Jones

This is month nine in Peru, and I think it's safe to say the shiny new feel of a novel country and experience has now well and truly worn off. Now that I am closer to reality I feel better able to write a more accurate account of my experience here in Peru.

Peru is a country of extremes: there are beautiful and ugly places, nice and nasty people. The only constants I have experienced are the food and the weather; they are both amazing. As a vegetarian, it's more than a little difficult to find foods for myself outside of the campus, but the vegetarian dishes I have found and tasted have been amazing. Peruvians in general are amazing cooks – especially when it comes to desserts. They have some really weird combinations that I would never have thought of in a million years that taste amazing. Have you ever had a vegetarian hamburger made with fried egg, fried plantain, crispy chips, tomato, lettuce, mayonnaise and ketchup? If not, you need to!

I've been on two weekend breaks so far with wonderful weather and so many breathtaking views that my camera had a hard job keeping up. My first trip was to Huanchaco, a beautiful beach town in Truillo (pronounced Truhio), where we ate every day at one of the coolest vegetarian restaurants I've been to in my time here called 'Otra Cosa' (Other Thing), sunbathed at the beach, and took a ride on one of the local fishing boats called a 'Caballito de totora' and destroyed my hair in the salt-water sea. Huaraz was the second chosen destination located in the mountains of Peru and where I spent my twenty-third birthday. While there we booked a local tour and spent three days touring famous sites with our Spanish-speaking guides. I've seen the White Jesus statue in Campo Santo, the Inca Ruins of Chavin, viewed the Llanganuco Lake and climbed the famous mountain Pastoruri. To me nature is one of the most amazing things about God; I don't remember ever being so speechless at such natural beauty as I was in Huaraz. I have two more trips to make – one to the Jungle of Peru to see some amazing waterfalls and one to Cusco, Peru's most famous attraction, to see the Inca Ruins.

For me mission work here has not been what I imagined. I'm not helping extremely disadvantaged people and making significant sacrifices, but I'm helping with everything that I can and I'm so glad it is possible for me to do it in another country. I help the university's

Pathfinder club when I can and help out with the English Sabbath School every week. We recently had a national English conference here too, where I organised a talent show for our conference attendees and conducted a workshop with Jennifer, the other missionary here.

I'm also using something I never considered could be used to help others: my language. I'm an English teacher! I have recently completed teaching 4 classes in 2 cycles and am now teaching 3 more in my third cycle. I no longer look behind me when people call me 'Miss' and 'Teacher', I answer questions about English grammar, explain vocabulary, correct sentences and grade exams. I get frustrated when my students don't study and love it when they do. And I must admit I have learnt a lot more about my own language through teaching it.

I now have the greatest respect for all teachers; it is so much more than just a job, it becomes your life. It requires effort, perseverance and trust in God. It's not just teaching a subject; it's preparing classes, planning for the different ages, abilities and interests of students; it's encouraging them to continue to try when it gets tough for them. There are some days when I wish I could do something else rather than teach; (I teach three two-hour classes a day from Monday to Thursday) but I can honestly say that I love it, and I love my students, both past and present. I know now that Peru will always be a part of me, my heart is filled with the friends I've made and the positive and character building experiences I've had.

I don't want to give you the wrong idea; Peru hasn't been a bed of roses for me. There have been hard times, I've had my share of culture shock and encounters with not-so-nice people and I still miss my family and friends in England immensely, but taking everything into account, I can honestly say I would do it all over again.



Joanna Jones' home church is Clapton Community. She is currently volunteering at the Peruvian Union University and will be there until February 2010.

## Capitalism

In the legendary Marvel film, Spider-Man, a young, visibly shaken Peter Parker watches as his uncle's life ebbs away; he then recalls his uncle's infamous words: 'with great power comes great responsibility'. This is true with regards to money issues and surviving in a society that is crazed by capitalism.

### Capitalist thinking – a growing phenomenon

Capitalism is the buzzword in the newsrooms and the headlines of daily tabloids. Running a search of the major newspapers in the UK shows that the word *capitalism* has over 2,000 citations on these newspaper sites, simply showing how this word is widely used in all spheres of society. The economic system of capitalism hangs upon four pillars:

- **Private ownership of property.** Put simply, the goods and services within capitalism are produced and traded by those capable of producing and delivering them to the market. These people are known as *capitalists*.
- **A quest for personal profit or maximising gain.** Due to their ability to provide goods and services for the market, capitalists are able to sell these to the market and sometimes at high costs to make profit.
- **A spirit of competition.** Capitalists do not operate alone in their quest for profit. They contend with others also providing the same goods or services, encouraging competition in the market and a means of survival.
- Finally within capitalism the thinking is that a **free market** (one without interference from government) promotes political, human and religious freedom. Hence capitalists adopt the notion of a *laissez-faire*, hands-off policy.

In summary, capitalism is all about having something of value (goods or a service) and using this to make the most gain (profit),

### • Willie Tafadzwa Chinyamurindi



Image © AllStarPLC.com

at the same time maintaining that your product or service remains valuable with time against other goods or services (competition) in a world perceived to be having no impediments (free market).

So how can I as a Christian respond to these pillars of capitalism? A good starting point is the creation week. God (the first property owner) stations men in the Garden of Eden and instructs men to be 'fruitful' (Genesis 1:28) and even to 'dress' (or maintain or cultivate) the garden (Genesis 2:25). God gives man responsibility to take care of the things given to him, and subsequently man's ability to make wealth was a gift given to him by God (Deuteronomy 8:18). Thus we learn two important things here: **1.** There is no such thing as easy work or easy money and **2.** It is God who gives us the ability to be able to work and make wealth.

It's sad how the society we live in has overturned this God-given model of labour for a more self-destructive one based upon convenience and the easy way out. Anytime when faced with the daunting choice of making quick money illegally or through any illicit means like gambling or drugs, the right question to ask would be: 'Does this fit in the model God gave man?' This is a model of accountability, responsibility and labour, a model that acknowledges that it is God who gives the ability to make wealth based upon *his* way, and God's way is not based on anything harmful or deceitful or acts of darkness. Remember, with great capital is expected a measure of great responsibility towards God and our fellow men.

Willie Tafadzwa Chinyamurindi enjoys writing and currently resides in Milton Keynes where he runs a blog dedicated to sharing audio sermons online [www.dare2stand.blogspot.com](http://www.dare2stand.blogspot.com)

## Secularism

Imagine yourself wandering in the old quarter of a city somewhere in Europe. Narrow, winding streets – no good for cars. Some interesting little shops. All sorts of smells. The sun peeping through only from certain angles. And sooner or later you'll come across the cathedral, or a big church, and a marketplace. Flowers, vegetables, cheeses, meats, handbags, jeans, souvenirs for tourists, second-hand books and old CDs. Leave the noisy, bustling marketplace and go into the cathedral and you enter a quieter, darker, quite different world.

In olden days many of the priests and monks would have spent most of their lives within the church praying, studying, going through the routines of worship, and waiting for the people to come to them for services. Some of the priests would go out into the marketplace to take some gospel kindness (or a little gospel fear!) to the people. Now for the Latin lesson! Those who went out into the marketplace regularly were called *seculars*. It comes from a Latin word *saeculum* meaning 'this present and temporal world'.

When the priests came back to the cathedral they had the muck of the marketplace on their sandals, the smell of the market on their clothes, the language of the marketplace in their ears, and maybe the values of the marketplace in their minds. And so, as they did their business in the marketplace, they themselves became affected by it. It was two-way traffic.

Well, the number of people in the marketplace has become greater, and the number going into the church has become smaller. The noise of commerce drowns out the prayers in the church. And the result is that 'secular' values have become dominant.

It's pretty clear nowadays that we live in a secular world. Money and profit are uppermost in people's minds. We seek happiness in the marketplace – holidays, clothes, homes, cars, sport, IT – no need to go into the cathedral to see life from a different angle. That's why the whole financial crash of the last year came as a big shock. People had felt fairly secure and satisfied in the marketplace. And a visit to God in the cathedral was really not on the agenda for most people.

People find their security and satisfaction in all kinds of things. Doing their own thing, all the things that money can buy, their country, their team, their virtual worlds, power over others, gangs. So many choices.

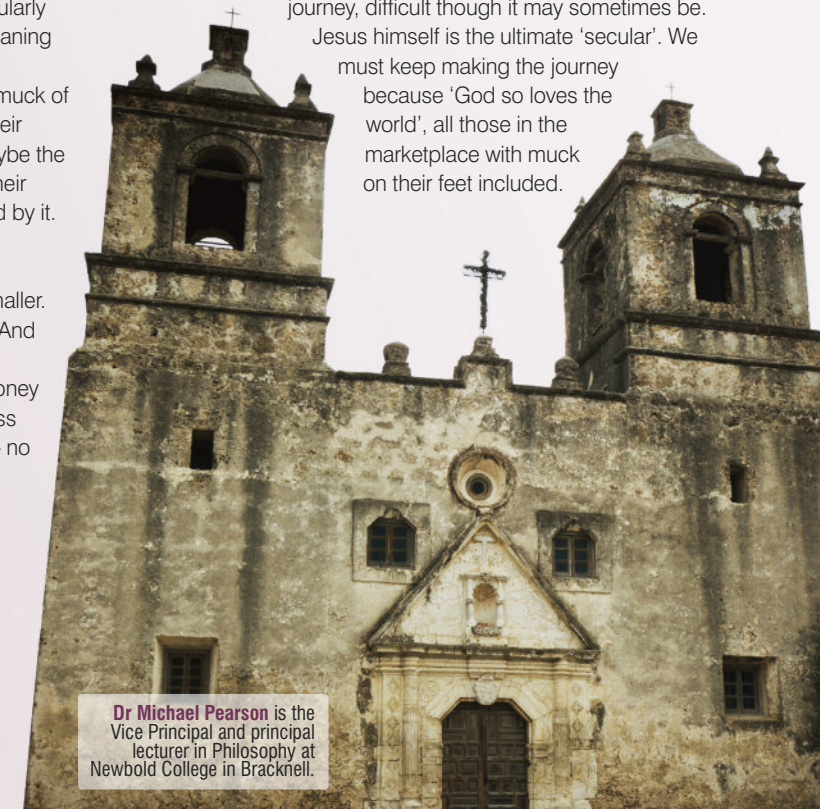
In our secular society, the empty church has become a

carpet warehouse. Christian prayers silently fade away from school assemblies. Twenty-four hour opening of shops. Couples celebrate their wedding – if they have one – in a hotel. Little Christian programming in TV schedules, even on Sundays. Favourite songs rather than hymns at funerals.

And of course religious people bring a lot of the muck of the marketplace into the church on their shoes without knowing. Power games dressed up in holy words. Pushing your own agenda. Defending your own 'turf'. The usual battlegrounds are music, positions of power over others, different ways of understanding the Bible, various questions about our sexual lives.

Being a faithful go-between from marketplace to church and back again is difficult stuff. And Jesus expects us to keep making the journey, difficult though it may sometimes be.

Jesus himself is the ultimate 'secular'. We must keep making the journey because 'God so loves the world', all those in the marketplace with muck on their feet included.



Dr Michael Pearson is the Vice Principal and principal lecturer in Philosophy at Newbold College in Bracknell.

### • Dr Michael Pearson

## The results are in!

The **encounter** photo competition has had some amazing entries in two categories. Congratulations and many thanks to all those who entered as we had some very varied and interesting submissions. The winners are pictured below. We decided to open up the judging to the public vote, and although it was close, the category winners have been now been selected by you.

### Earth, Sea & Sky

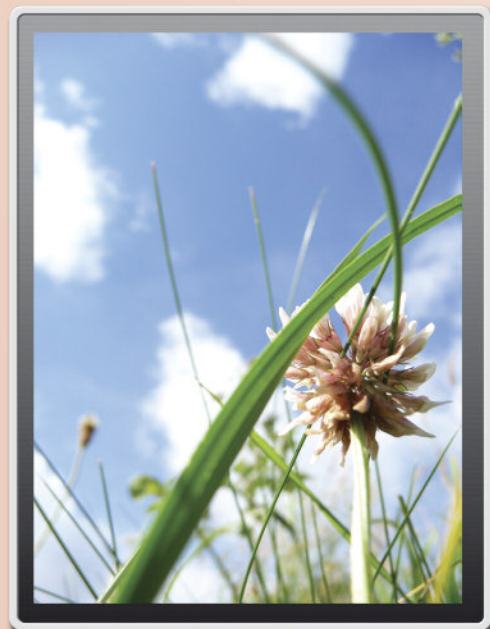
– landscape photographs of the UK & Ireland.



In this category, **'Inspired'** by Carl Jeffers was a runaway winner, receiving just over 71% of the votes. Pastor Hulbert writes: *I like the light in this picture. It can be hard to capture a sunset photo, particularly on a mobile phone, but Carl has succeeded with a nicely balanced picture with contrasting sky colours, the eye being drawn naturally towards the church spire, and an intriguing question for the viewer: What is in the foreground?* **Tips for improvement:** It is a shame the photo is degraded slightly by what looks like dust on the lens – often a problem with a phone camera – but as Carl has a good eye I would encourage him to develop his skills further with a better camera.

### UK & Ireland Wildlife

– native animals, birds, plants and creatures in their natural habitats.



**'Life from Below'** submitted by Jennie Hall received just over 36% of the public votes. Of this photograph, Pastor Hulbert comments: *Jenny has gone to some effort taking this picture. The low angle is good, the depth of field with the scattered clouds behind adding a pleasing backdrop. It forms a colourful picture that highlights God's Creation.* **Tips for improvement:** Moving the grass in the foreground slightly to the left would have made for a sharper focus on the clover while still keeping the interest of the depth of field with the grass.

*I think the key to taking a good photograph is being at the right place at the right time and investigating different angles and levels. The photo was taken on a Sabbath afternoon walk at Bovisand Bay, Plymouth, with a few people from church, and the good weather definitely helps the image.* Jennie Hall.

*I'd like to say a big thank you to all who voted and supported. Also to **encounter**, as competitions like this are great for encouraging young people to admire and capture the beauty of God's work in nature.* Carl Jeffers.

Prizes of Yann Arthus-Bertrand's stunning book, *The Earth from Above – 365 New Days*, will be on its way to Carl and the *BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2009* portfolio book will be sent to Jennie Hall.

The BUC panel, comprising **encounter** editors plus BUC Communications director and keen photographer, Pastor Victor Hulbert, chose the overall winner 'Life from Below', so congratulations to Jennie who will also receive a Joby 'Gorillapod' as her prize. This flexible tripod is a great tool for every photographer as it is lightweight, easy to carry and can be adapted to wrap itself around or stand on most surfaces. Ideal for outdoor use – we're sure Jenny will find it useful to discover even more unusual photo angles!

We hope that your interest in the natural world around us has been awakened by this competition and, as a result, we may all feel a greater sense of responsibility towards the Creation that God entrusted to us; and, of course, a desire to get outside and experience the sights and sounds for ourselves!

If you have any ideas for further competitions you would like to see run in **encounter**, please contact us at: [encounter@adventist.org.uk](mailto:encounter@adventist.org.uk)



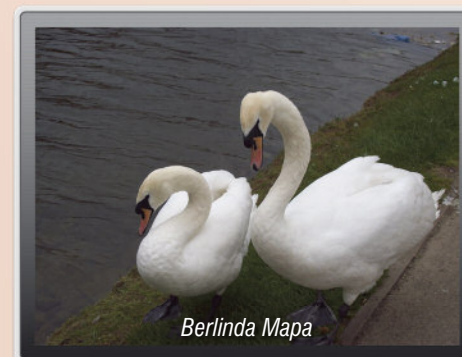
William Kelly



Suyin Haynes



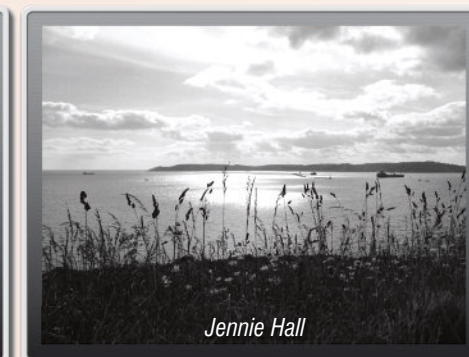
William Kelly



Berlinda Mapa



Berlinda Mapa



Jennie Hall

## Perfectionism

• Les Ackie



'Is it possible to be perfect?' The answer would have to be a resounding 'yes!' This is because Jesus said, 'Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect' (Matthew 5:48; see also Heb. 6:1; Eph. 4:12-13). Obviously, Jesus would not ask us to accomplish the impossible. The key question is, 'What is the nature of this perfection?'

One of the greatest challenges facing our Church today is the belief in the doctrine of perfectionism. This is essentially the belief that we can reach a state of complete sinless perfection before Jesus returns.

The Bible makes it very clear that we can overcome every sin with which the enemy tempts us (1 Cor. 10:13; see also Rom. 8:37). But sin is not only confined to wilful wrong-doing, but also involves failing to do what we should do (sins of omission – see Jas 4:17).

In my striving to be perfect, how can I know that I have not committed a sin of omission? What about the sins of ignorance for which the Old Testament sanctuary system made provision? As I seek to be perfect, how can I know that I have not committed a sin without being aware of it? The reality is that an inadequate view of sin will lead to an inadequate view of salvation.

Sin is not just about breaking a divine set of rules and regulations. Sin has first and foremost to do with a broken relationship with God. The wrong things that we do are the result of the greatest sin, our choice to separate ourselves from God.

It seems pointless for me to worry about a condition I will never know I have reached. According to Ellen White, 'The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes' (*Steps to Christ*, p. 36). My primary task is to keep trusting Jesus to give me the strength to overcome. It is his task to reproduce his character in me.

We do not become perfect simply by ceasing to do wrong things. We become perfect by allowing Jesus to change our thoughts, our attitudes, our morality, and then demonstrate his love to others.

When we study the context of Jesus' command to be 'perfect' in Matthew 5:48, what we observe are his instructions to his followers to both experience and demonstrate his love in the world. We are to:



- love our enemies
  - bless those who curse us
  - do good to those who hate us
  - pray for those who spitefully use us, and persecute us
- (Matthew 5:43-47)

This is the essence of perfection – my choice to give Jesus permission to live out his life in me and through me. It does not refer to a state of absolute sinlessness, but to a growth in Christian maturity (see Heb. 5:13-6:1).

The main danger of perfectionism is that we can become discouraged and give up trying because of an unrealistic standard or we can become fanatical in our attempt to achieve what only Jesus can accomplish in us.

What Jesus requires of us in these last days is not a legalistic perfectionism which keeps me focused on myself. Instead, we are instructed that 'The last message of mercy to be given to the world is a revelation of his character of love.' *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 415.

Les Ackie is the Family Life Director at the South England Conference

## Racism

• Amna Mendoza



**Racism:** Hostile attitude or behaviour to others because of their race (*Collins English Dictionary*, 2004).

### By encountering you are changed

No one is born racist. No, not even Hitler. It is through hearing, seeing and experiencing racism that we learn to be and are changed into racist individuals. It's a bit like man bags, skinny jeans, and Ug boots. Admit it; we weren't crazy about them a few years back. However, after a few million pounds worth of advertising and exposure to them, we're welcoming them like a warm day in December.

### Sowing seeds of racism

A surprisingly large number of people who condemn racism actively sow seeds of blatant racism.<sup>1</sup> You've probably heard a neighbour say, 'I'm not racist but you don't want to go there; all [enter race here] people are drug dealers/hostile.' Whether or not a person considers him/herself to be maliciously racist, they are still accountable for the racist seeds they sow.

Like many other seeds you don't have to ask racism to come your way. This was the case for two church-going young men we'll call Sam and Tim.

Sam grew up listening to his dad cursing people of other ethnic groups, calling them 'those people'. His dad had created a 'them' and 'us' barrier. After a while Sam believed he was better than 'those people' and despised and felt scorn towards them.

Tim lived in a large city where others like himself regularly told him that he would be treated unfairly, accused wrongfully and be disliked by people because of his race. Soon he blamed and then excused all his failings on his race. Like Sam, racist seeds were sown in Tim's heart which made him bitter and angry towards 'those people' of other races.

Sam and Tim were once victims but through personal choice allowed an evil seed of racism to take root and bloom. The tragic thing is, if they continue to allow race to be a



bigger issue in their lives than the love of Christ, they will never reach the glorious Kingdom of God. Why? Because in Christ there is no 'Jew nor Greek' no 'them' or 'us' but unity in Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

### What about racist jokes? They're only jokes!

'What do you get if you cross a black man, an Irishman and an Indian man?' Answer: Racism is no joke. Why? Because there is no racist joke, story or comment that is too innocent to qualify as a breeding ground for racism.

The humour/logic of all racist jokes is the damaging stereotype associated with it. Such jokes cultivate prejudice which is neither logical nor funny. Moreover, beliefs in racial stereotypes have resulted in the hatred and murder of countless innocent people. It is no laughing matter!

### How can we defeat racism?

There is no one more apt to tell us how to defeat racism than someone who was once both a perpetrator and a victim! Saul who became Paul discovered that only Christ is able to heal and free the sinful heart from racist thoughts and inclinations. His instruction is simple. He says, 'Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.' (Philippians 4:8, KJV).

<sup>1</sup>Kawakami, K. et al. (2009). 'Mispredicting Affective and Behavioural Responses to Racism'. *Science*. 323 (1), 276-278.

<sup>2</sup>Taken from Galatians 3:28 (*Amplified Bible*).

Amna is peaceful by name and vivacious by nature. She works in London as a school teacher, enjoys creative cookery, craft and writing.





## Postmodernism

Did you hear the one about the vicar who, when asked for directions, replied, 'Well, I wouldn't start from here if I were you'? Where else is one to start but from where one stands? Understanding the assumptions of our postmodern condition is useful when contemplating the route to our shared destiny.

Courses on Postmodernism are taught with reference to subjects such as Art, Literature, Music and Architecture, focusing on new ways of interpreting texts and works. Roland Barthes puts it this way: 'The birth of the reader is at the expense of the death of the author', that is, the meaning of a novel or a piece of music lies in our interpretation and the experiences we bring to bear. Searching for the 'intention' of the hallowed author or composer is no longer our objective.

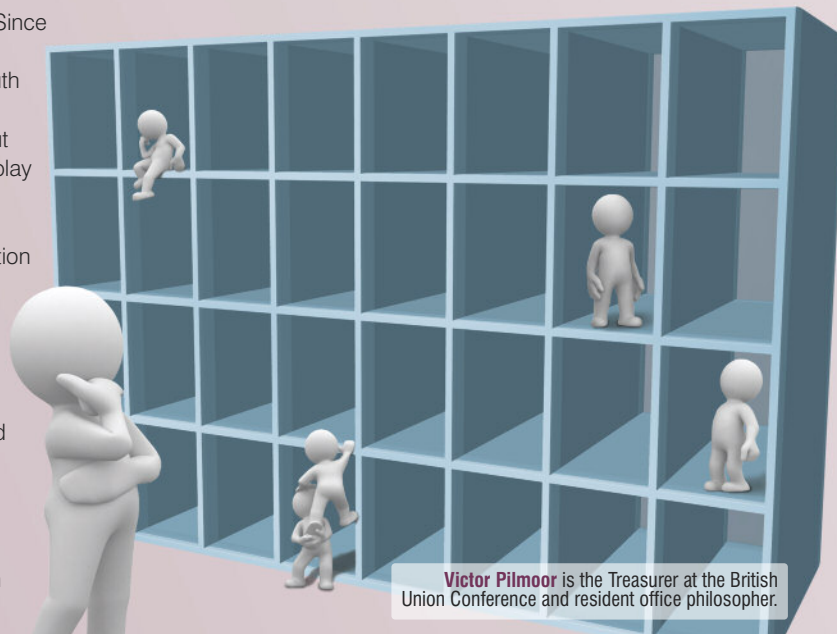
This theory has afforded us some social progress. Gone are the days when our icons were all dead white guys. Postmodernism has elevated the thoughts of people of different colours, classes and religions because it recognises multiple viewpoints. Anyone's story may be worth telling, not just those of the most powerful. There is something inherently Christian in this celebration of the meek and vulnerable.

Crucially 'truth' is not deemed a matter of objective fact. Since our world is constructed through our languages, signs, traditions and conventions, a postmodernist believes that truth is created, not discovered. This creativity can be seen in 'po-mo' works, which are often eclectically influenced without regard for the authenticity of any particular source. They display irony and self-awareness in their playful patchworks or multilayered structures. For an older person used to basing their faith on solid 'truth', the emergence of an entire generation that appear not to organise their thoughts in the same way must sometimes feel like an obstacle to sharing faith. If God is whoever we imagine him to be and the Bible a text open to undiscerning interpretation, what common faith binds us together? Indeed, if God is merely a construct and not a truth, why not adopt a non-theistic philosophy altogether and eschew the restraints of organised religion?

The current advertising slogan for 'Alpha', the course designed for the spiritual searcher, asks, 'Does God exist?' and tellingly provides multiple choice boxes: Yes, No, and Probably. This undoubtedly targets a generation familiar with

uncertainty and comfortable with life's grey areas. That third option acknowledges that faith is not a matter of 1 (certain) versus 0 (impossible). Between these poles lies a continuum of feeling about the unknowable. Does a 49% belief in God define one as an atheist and a 51% belief as a Christian? Any threat of spiritual anarchy posed by Postmodernism must surely be outweighed by the opportunities inherent in embracing the complexity of true faith.

Postmodernism began as a critical theory, an approach to discussion and evaluation. In this sense it is entirely appropriate that we exercise our subjective feelings in a context of critical judgement in our spiritual lives. Just as we may be in small part socialists, capitalists, exhibitionists or sympathisers of any other 'ism', we are not wholly defined by any one pigeonhole or label. Our personal interpretations are balanced with reading and reference, our doubts are reined in by faith and hope in a Creator who lives. Our encounter is not just with the culture of Christ but with his character. Our identity comes not from sanctifying an image of our own making but rather the sacredness of 'the image of God' within.



Victor Pilmoor is the Treasurer at the British Union Conference and resident office philosopher.

• Victor Pilmoor

## Materialism . . . -ness

2.13GHz Intel Core 2 Duo processor with 3MB on chip shared L2 cache running 1:1 with processor speed, FireWire 400 port (to 400 Mbps), 1066 MHz frontside bus, 2 GB of 800MHz DDR2 SDRAM, 160GB 5400 – rpm Serial ATA hard disk drive....

If someone had mentioned any part of this description to me a year ago, not only would I have been staring at them blankly, but I would probably have started looking for help . . . for them. However, a year and a little bit of investigating later, I now understand that the seemingly incoherent string of figures and text is describing one of my most prized possessions – my MacBook.

Now, as a fan of all things Apple, my mind immediately jumps to my MacBook or iPod touch when asked about my special possessions, but, whatever the make, model and storage capacity, we all have our own belongings that are close to our hearts. Some of us find a shopping spree to be the most exhilarating activity and some see the purchasing of a new phone the ultimate prize but, at the end of the day, the question is: **Do we love these belongings?**

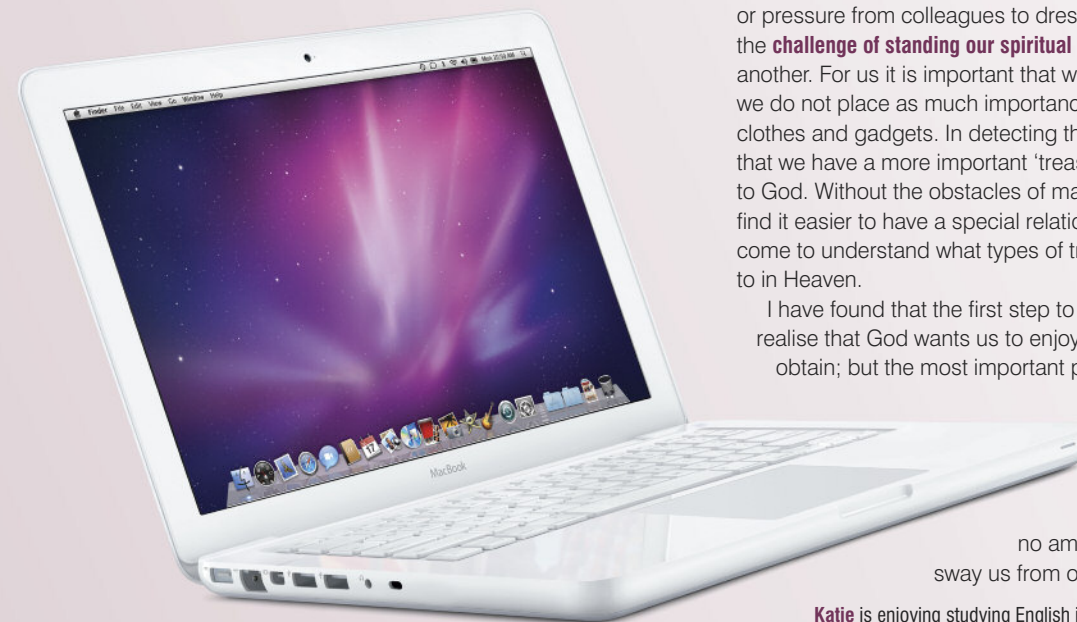


Image courtesy of Apple

• Katie Ramharacksingh

I remember reading Matthew chapter 6 when growing up and never getting a full grasp of what Jesus was advising us to do. 'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.' (Matthew 6:19-21, NIV) In my mind all I could picture was gold bars and jewels in a little pile under my bed in Heaven. A few years later I started realising that there could be so many different types of 'treasure' and that this must have been what Jesus was referring to.

**Materialism** can sometimes be a tricky subject. Lots of people discuss '**How far is too far?**' when it comes to loving possessions and belongings. However, for Adventist youth I think it can be simple. **Materialism** is simply when we place higher values on material objects than we do on things that will help us spiritually.

As young people in a materialistic world, it is inevitable that many or even most of us may struggle with materialism. Whether we feel pressure from our peers to have the same gadgets as them or pressure from colleagues to dress in the same style, we all face the **challenge of standing our spiritual ground** at some point or another. For us it is important that we make it clear to others that we do not place as much importance on things like cars, money, clothes and gadgets. In detecting this, those around us will notice that we have a more important 'treasure' in our sights: being close to God. Without the obstacles of material things in our way, we will find it easier to have a special relationship with God and really come to understand what types of treasures we can look forward to in Heaven.

I have found that the first step to combating materialism is to realise that God wants us to enjoy things that we work hard to obtain; but the most important part to remember is that **God**

**comes first** – all day, every day, without question! If we remember and practise keeping God first in our lives, no amount of Apple products will ever sway us from our spiritual walk with God.

**Katie** is enjoying studying English in her final year of university; she can also be found helping out the SECMedia department with various projects.

# Mental health challenges in teenagers – recognising the warning signs

**Sharon Platt-McDonald**  
BUC Health Ministries director & Special Needs co-ordinator

Teenage years can be challenging. Both parents and children will have their share of challenges to face, and sometimes handling them can be tough.

Most people when looking back on their adolescent years report that they encountered varying levels of stress reacting to demands or expectations from parents, educational establishments, peers and society at large. The stressors they identified as putting them under pressure were: trying to get along with family members; doing well at school; being popular with their peers and associates; being responsible and making life decisions they were not always ready for.

It is clear that, although these pressures are generally unavoidable, it is quite natural that teenagers worry about them. However, the warning signs that there may be an underlying problem or something more serious going on is when the worrying becomes excessive and interrupts the ability to function normally, resulting in sudden and extreme behaviour change. So, for

example, if you appear to be sad most of the time or you feel extremely unhappy, hopeless or worthless, very withdrawn or aggressive, these could be early indicators of a mental health problem.

Ongoing 'symptoms' cannot be ignored and, if discovered early, appropriate help can be sought and effective intervention gained. As a teen, if you find yourself doing things you would not normally do, feeling out of control, unable to cope with feelings or emotions or worried that you might be depressed, it is important as a starting point to talk to someone about it or seek advice from a health professional. Use the table below as a guide to know when you might need help.

It may be helpful if you are a friend, peer, or interested other to recognise the following expressed feelings, experiences/changes and behaviours as warning signs that need to be investigated.

The table below gives an indication of what to look out for.



If you observe any of the behaviours below in a friend or another young person, speaking with them directly is best if you are able to gain their trust. Let them know that they are not being judged but that you genuinely care. This will help to assist them in seeking help and encourage compliance with any necessary interventions which may follow.

As an individual, if you are concerned that you or anyone you know is experiencing any of the symptoms outlined in the table below, discussing your concerns with your family doctor, teacher, school counsellor or school nurse is an initial step. A referral may need to be made to a behavioural therapist, a psychologist, psychiatrist or educational psychologist. Additionally, other specialists like a social worker or Christian counsellor could get involved. However, recognising the signs and tackling it early will always be a vital first step.

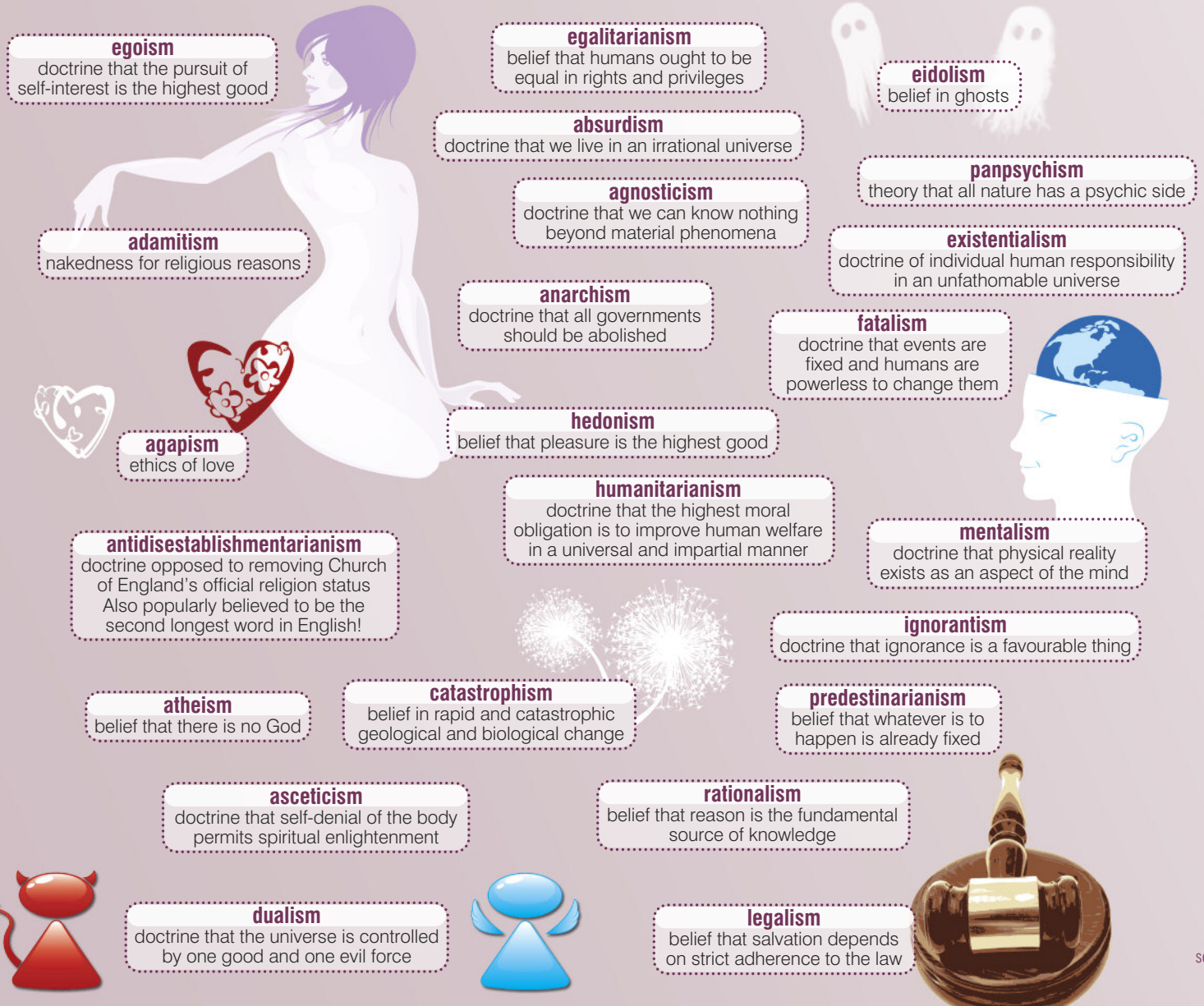
The BUC Health Ministries department has produced a Mental Wellness Handbook for every church in the British Isles. This document highlights how to support individuals with mental illness and encourage emotional healing and wellbeing.

Feelings:	Affected by:	Experiences/changes:	Behaviours:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overreacts often</li> <li>Very angry most of the time</li> <li>Frequent crying</li> <li>Constantly expresses feelings of worthlessness or guilt</li> <li>Preoccupied with physical appearance or problems</li> <li>Anxious or worried a lot more than other young people</li> <li>Extremely fearful generally</li> <li>Expresses grief for an extended time after a loss or death</li> <li>Frightened that they are no longer in control of their mind or that someone else is controlling it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor concentration</li> <li>Excessive fidgeting</li> <li>Difficulty making decisions</li> <li>Lacks focus</li> <li>Exhibits repetitive acts or demonstrates compulsive behaviour like hand washing, cleaning, or performing certain routines several times a day</li> <li>Persistent nightmares</li> <li>Worries about being harmed or hurting others</li> <li>Thinking they are a bad person or prone to do 'bad things'</li> <li>Irrational thoughts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loses interest in hobbies</li> <li>Avoids friends or family</li> <li>Declining performance at school</li> <li>Excessive daydreaming</li> <li>Inability to complete activities</li> <li>Unexplained changes in sleeping or eating habits</li> <li>Isolates themselves, preferring to be alone most of the time</li> <li>Expresses inability to cope with life</li> <li>Hears voices that cannot be explained</li> <li>Talks about suicide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erratic behaviour</li> <li>Alcohol consumption or other drugs use</li> <li>Develops behaviour which raises suspicion of anorexia or bulimia (diets or exercises excessively to 'lose weight' although obviously thin, abuses laxatives, takes enemas when not constipated, eats large amounts of food and then induces vomiting)</li> <li>Finds enjoyment in hurting others</li> <li>Wilfully destroys property</li> <li>Deliberately breaks the law</li> <li>Takes uncalculated risks</li> <li>Endangers life of self or others without apparent concern</li> </ul>

# e Isms – what do they mean?

## Random 'isms'

Some other 'isms' you might have heard of and some you might not know.



**egoism**  
doctrine that the pursuit of self-interest is the highest good

**egalitarianism**  
belief that humans ought to be equal in rights and privileges

**absurdism**  
doctrine that we live in an irrational universe

**agnosticism**  
doctrine that we can know nothing beyond material phenomena

**anarchism**  
doctrine that all governments should be abolished

**hedonism**  
belief that pleasure is the highest good

**humanitarianism**  
doctrine that the highest moral obligation is to improve human welfare in a universal and impartial manner

**mentalism**  
doctrine that physical reality exists as an aspect of the mind

**ignorantism**  
doctrine that ignorance is a favourable thing

**predestinarianism**  
belief that whatever is to happen is already fixed

**rationalism**  
belief that reason is the fundamental source of knowledge

**legalism**  
belief that salvation depends on strict adherence to the law

**adamitism**  
nakedness for religious reasons

**adamicism**  
nakedness for religious reasons

**agapism**  
ethics of love

**antidisestablishmentarianism**  
doctrine opposed to removing Church of England's official religion status  
Also popularly believed to be the second longest word in English!

**atheism**  
belief that there is no God

**asceticism**  
doctrine that self-denial of the body permits spiritual enlightenment

**dualism**  
doctrine that the universe is controlled by one good and one evil force

**eidolism**  
belief in ghosts

**panpsychism**  
theory that all nature has a psychic side

**existentialism**  
doctrine of individual human responsibility in an unfathomable universe

**fatalism**  
doctrine that events are fixed and humans are powerless to change them

**millenarianism**  
belief that a major transformation of society will be produced in the near future

**nihilism**  
belief that all endeavours are futile and meaningless; extreme scepticism

**spiritualism**  
belief that claims transcendancy of the divine being and spiritual nature of reality

**primitivism**  
doctrine that a simple and natural life is morally best

**pessimism**  
doctrine that this is the worst of all the worlds

**scepticism**  
doctrine that true knowledge is always uncertain



**omnism**  
belief in all religions

**stoicism**  
living according to reason and virtue and in harmony with the divine order of the universe

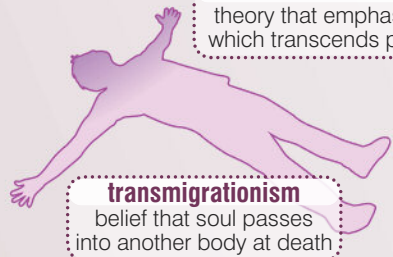
**socialism**  
doctrine of centralised state control of wealth and property

**synergism**  
belief that human will and divine spirit co-operate in salvation

**panzoism**  
belief that the whole universe is a living thing

**pantheism**  
belief that the universe is divine; belief in all gods

**transcendentalism**  
theory that emphasises that which transcends perception



**transmigrationism**  
belief that soul passes into another body at death



**quietism**  
doctrine of enlightenment through mental tranquility

**zoism**  
doctrine that life originates from a single vital principle

**zootheism**  
attribution of divine qualities to animals



**zoomorphism**  
attributing animal characteristics to gods



Calling all Youth, Teens and Pathfinders  
SEC YOUTH CONFERENCE

# RETURN

15 – 17 January 2010

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Evangelism & Leadership Training  
Youth & the Prophetic Mandate  
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**The weekend features:**  
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\*SEC Youth Subsidy Available as well as subsidies from your local church and area.



source: [www.phrontistery.info/isms](http://www.phrontistery.info/isms) and Wikipedia/Wiktionary

## • Samantha Ecclestone



### • Sunday 8 Nov. 2009

I think I am losing my mind. . . . Now, more than ever, I have begun to wish that the supernatural was real! I mean, I believe in God, don't I? . . . I don't know!

I have had the most unnerving desire to have something tangible to believe in. It seems that witches, wizards and the world of make-believe are all far more real than Christianity! Well, the Christianity I know, anyhow. I am having serious doubts. . . .

### • Monday 9 Nov. 2009

Woke up this morning and still feel the same . . . although I am smiling about a dream I had. I dreamt that I was a fairy that could make anything happen with a wish. It was the best feeling. I felt free and in control; as if I could do whatever I wanted to in order to make the world a better place. Life wasn't a struggle like my reality is.

My dream makes me wonder about the benefits I get from being a Christian. What are they? Where are they? I have no assurance that I will live to see tomorrow. . . . No assurance that I will reach Heaven. . . . Not even a smidgen of an assurance that I will be reunited with my loved ones after death. . . . What's the point?

In my fairy dream, I felt content, carefree, happy! Being 'good' was in my nature and I was ultimately surrounded by greatness and utopia, as opposed to being shrouded in sin.

Of course, there were trolls and demons, but in my nocturnal world, they were easily dealt with. I simply had to combine three natural components, elderflower, rosehip and lemongrass, to guarantee the eradication of those evils and \*poof\* – peace.

Having woken up, I am sorely disappointed. I feel as if God really didn't give us a fighting chance. . . . He set us all up to fail, what with one trial or another – believers and non-believers alike. He said himself that the road would not be easy. He failed to mention the frequency of the hard times!

### • Tuesday 10 Nov. 2009

I read yesterday's entry back and I realise that I sound pessimistic but I just keep thinking, 'WE ARE BORN INTO SIN!' Our nature, as mankind, is to be sinful. We have to struggle to do good. . . . \*Sigh\* What if I'm tired of struggling . . . ? What are the alternatives? What then? That can't be right. . . .

### • Wednesday 11 Nov. 2009

### • Thursday 12 Nov. 2009

### • Friday 13 Nov. 2009

### • Saturday 14 Nov. 2009

Woke up this morning. . . . .

Woke up this morning. . . . .

Woke up this morning. . . . .

So diary, I'm awake this morning, realising that I had stopped trying to see the positives in Christianity and in myself. Instead, I actively sought the negatives. I failed to see the good in God anymore and therefore started to see the promise in everything else.

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday I just thought, 'What if?' and then felt bad that they all came and went without me even throwing a sideward glance at God.

But then the sun shone through my window and it hit me: I woke up this morning!

I didn't wake because I wished to. I didn't wake because I chanced to. I woke because God wanted me awake.

I KNOW God and I woke up with the sun on my face, knowing that if I can bring myself to trust him enough to accept the life he chooses to give me each day, then surely it's only right that I acknowledge that he is the Wizard, Fairy and Leprechaun of my dreams and is ready to cast out all of my doubts.

I guess that I needed to use three natural elements to rid my heart and mind of my demons, too. Faith, hope and love – the greatest of these being love.

### Q. How can I still be a Christian around my friends at college without acting like a 'weirdo'?

A. Being a Christian is not supposed to be a show – it is supposed to be a way of life! In a time when there are so many extremist religions, you need to genuinely know who you believe in and why. When you aspire to have the heart of Christ, you will show your friends that Christians are people who are different – not because we are 'weird' but because the love of Jesus in our hearts fills us with wisdom so we won't have to get into stupid arguments; it fills us with peace so we won't get agitated as quickly; and it gives us confidence so we don't have to join in picking on others and bringing them down to make ourselves feel better. We actually can make being a Christian attractive to peers who have no real identity of their own.

### Q. I've been out of work for 6 months, struggling financially and praying hard. Nothing has changed, except that I owe more money! Why doesn't God help me?

A. God is helping you but not on what you class as important right now! Look back over the last 6 months – what have you got that you are grateful for or have enjoyed? . . . Have you been able to go out with friends, share laughs, go to a few places, buy clothes/gifts, and so on? Create a list. Look over that list and then look at what money is needed for. Can you still say God is not helping you? Financial 'giants' are things everyone struggles with, especially now. God could be helping you with patience or simply helping you to build your confidence in him. He has created an opening for you . . . don't wait for a lump sum of cash. Use the gifts you have been given to find an innovative way to generate an income. AND remember – you are a precious child of God, which means that the world's limitations don't apply to you!

# Aunty @

This is the section where you can have your say. Have you got any questions that you would never ask in AYS? What issues or concerns do you have? Write to me at [encounter@adventist.org.uk](mailto:encounter@adventist.org.uk)

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