People Frown Sometimes (Work Station Two)

Gary B. Swanson
man who has dedicated more than 50 years of his life to arguing—and strongly at that—against any God at all!

That Flew’s change of mind (if not yet heart) resulted from some of the recent evidence that has emerged from the realm of science is particularly encouraging and noteworthy for us as Adventists. It demonstrates that even a world-class thinker and scholar, like Flew, is able to see the evidences of “intelligent design” woven into the world of nature. This also illustrates the beauty and truth of the biblical statement: “When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13, NKJV).

Homing Christians: Work of the Holy Spirit

As a boy in Singapore, I raised homing pigeons. Worshipers there would buy pigeons at the pet store and then release them as thank offerings to the gods. I sold one of my birds to the same pet shop three times because of this religious practice. On the third time my pigeon returned to the home loft, a message written in Sanskrit to the gods was attached to its foot.

Jim Tucker mentions that research has shown that homing pigeons navigate by sensitivity to the Earth’s magnetic field, by observing the Sun, and by recognizing familiar landmarks as they near home. By acting on their drive to return home, and by following the critical signage available to them, homing pigeons return long distances to their nesting sites. By the grace of God, let us be homing Christians—individuals who actually trust and follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit, the counsels of God’s Word, and His messenger in order to return to our everlasting home loft with the Creator.

REFERENCES

2 Ibid., p. 38.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., p. 39.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., p. 40.
8 Ibid.
happy. We frown.

And that is a shame. We are an unhappy species. Should we tell the rest of the universe that we allow others of our very own kind to starve to death every day? That we focus an inordinate amount of our intelligence and resources on the development of weapons that could literally wipe out our entire species and many more besides? That we think so little of ourselves that we surgically discard thousands of our own unborn young?

Some scientists, considering the possibility of communicating with extraterrestrial life forms, are genuinely worried that if we tell creatures on other worlds what we’re truly like, they are very likely to have the intelligence, technology, and compassion to put us out of our misery. The writers of science fiction have actually explored this distressing scenario many times. Even C. S. Lewis, in his space trilogy, betrayed grave concern about the possibility of human space travel. With his Christian worldview of the depravity of humankind, he could see no point in sharing this kind of information with whoever or whatever is “out there.”

But now, of course, we find ourselves in a potentially nonfictional situation. Real scientists are using real instrumentation to communicate a real message.

Certainly sin has made this Earth a less than ideal place to live. And unfortunately, humanity is looking for solutions to our problems everywhere but in the right place. More than two centuries ago, Thomas Jefferson wrote in the United States Declaration of Independence that all are entitled to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” But what is happiness, and how can we achieve it?

To work out a definition of happiness, it may be necessary first to explain what happiness isn’t.

It isn’t the same as fun. “Fun is what we experience during an act,” writes Dennis Prager. “Happiness is what we experience after an act. . . . Understanding and accepting that true happiness has nothing to do with fun is one of the most liberating realizations we can ever come to.”

Furthermore, it isn’t synonymous with success. There are simply too many successful people among us who are terribly unhappy. We cannot observe their dissatisfaction without concluding that success seldom fulfills humankind’s pursuit of happiness.

And it isn’t avoiding what makes you miserable. If this were true, then truly money could buy happiness. The more money you have, the more you could distance yourself from what makes you miserable. But the existence of so many wealthy yet unhappy people on this Earth suggests that money can’t make unhappiness go away.

The fact is, “we are happiest,” writes Frederick Turner, “when we are striving not for happiness but, say, for artistic perfection, or for the purest service to other persons, or for knowledge.”

This is what Jesus meant when, after washing the disciples’ feet and pointing them to a life of service to others, He said, “‘If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them’” (John 13:17, KJV). And the Bible actually offers several very practical conditions for happiness:

1. Trust in God. “Those who trust the Lord,” wrote Solomon, “will be happy” (Prov. 16:20, NLT). This from a man who learned the hard way that success and wealth weren’t the answer. The world’s happiest people are those who realize their own human weakness and are able to put their wholehearted trust in God’s infinitely loving care.

2. Wisdom of God. Solomon at last freely acknowledged from whom his wisdom came and he exclaimed, “Happy is the man who finds wisdom” (3:13, NKJV). The real danger here—and it leads to unhappiness—is to forget the true source of human intelligence and intellectual accomplishment.

3. Hope in God. When the disciples learned that Jesus had been resurrected, they realized for the first time that He had provided a way of escape from the world’s misery and unhappiness. After He’d risen from the grave, Jesus appeared to His disciples and “showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord” (John 20:20, NIV).

We have an assurance that God loved us enough to send His Son to this Earth to set things right—so we never need to frown again. “Grace to you,” the apostle Paul wrote, “and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father” (Gal. 1:3, 4, NKJV). This is a message that we can communicate with confidence to the rest of the cosmos—as if the other universal inhabitants out there didn’t already know!

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