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FROM NEW AGE TO NEW LIFE

**When my atheist friend decided to join a church,
I decided to rescue him.**

I couldn't believe what I was hearing! For years, my friend Pavel was an atheist whose agnosticism dictated his approach to life. Then one day in late 1991, he broke the news: He had decided to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A *church*? It didn't make any difference whether it was the Adventist Church or the Catholic Church or the Orthodox Church. I couldn't imagine any church and my atheist friend coexisting.

As far as Adventists were concerned, I knew little about them. Just some rumors and criticism spread by the Communists and the Greek Orthodox Church in my homeland, Romania. Unable to hide my astonishment and disapproval of my

friend's choice, I sought to "rescue" him. But at the end of a long debate, I found that the issues involved in joining a church were not so simple and crystal-clear as they had appeared to me. Pavel had convinced me that certain generally accepted issues in Christianity deserved careful study and reflection—

Is the Bible relevant for all matters of life? How safe is it to follow tradition? What does God require for one's salvation? How effective is it to pray to the Virgin Mary? Which

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day of the week is the Lord's Day? What does the future hold for the world? For the Christian? Do all religions lead to heaven?

With these questions in mind, I returned to Bucharest to start the spring semester of my last year of studies in the university. Like many other Romanian youth, I was involved in New Age practices that had become popular in my country after the fall of Communism. As a believer in a somewhat nebulous syncretistic philosophy, which I believed reconciled all differences between religions, I was studying Zen and practicing Yoga meditation, requisites, I felt, for a monk's solitary lifestyle, which had attracted me.

Given this belief context, it was very hard for me to accept such assertions as: There is only *one* Christ, *one* way to be saved, *one* inspired book, *one* holy day, and *one* true church. Nevertheless, I began to read the Bible, starting with the Gospels, as my friend had advised me. For seven months, I spent two hours each morning reading my New Testament, even as I continued my New Age practices. But the more I read the Bible, the more uncomfortable I felt about my New Age meditation, and I also began to have serious questions about certain doctrines of the Greek Orthodox Church.

When summer came, I returned home, still struggling with unanswered questions. I asked my friend

for more books to read. He gave me a book on Bible prophecy and a brochure about the controversial issue of the Sabbath. Providentially (from my perspective now), at about the same time I found the book *The Great Controversy* on my mother's shelf. She had not had time to read it, she said; I decided to make up for her negligence.

Soon I was reading eight hours a day, a regime I continued for a month, at which time I found myself at a decisive spiritual crossroads. I had to make a choice: accept the new-found truth and let it change my life or reject it and continue in my old ways. I decided to give up my New Age practices, accept Jesus as my Saviour, and observe the seventh-day Sabbath. The decision was not without spiritual conflict; some day I expect to learn about the angelic battle that took place over my soul during those days. At the time, I was content to be on my way to the New Earth.

I began to regard the Bible as the most fascinating book ever written, and Jesus Christ became my only true teacher and most precious friend. In the fall of 1992, after an evangelistic series held by Brad Thorp in Bucharest, I made my decision to be baptized.

I could not have anticipated the blessings God soon poured into my life—including working for the church as editor of the Romanian

Signs of the Times, marrying Cecilia, a wonderful wife; having two lovely children and then, getting a full scholarship that allowed me not only to complete a degree in theology at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee, but also to attend the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in

Berrien Springs, Michigan. I also accepted God's call to teach and thus share the saving truths of the gospel.

Shall I say that I am thankful to God for all these blessings? That would not be enough! Words cannot express my gratitude—and eternity will be too short to utter it. □

INFINITE LOVE, INFINITE RISK

It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man's nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam, He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors. He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life.

Satan in heaven had hated Christ for His position in the courts of God. He hated Him the more when he himself was dethroned. He hated Him who pledged Himself to redeem a race of sinners. Yet into the world where Satan claimed dominion God permitted His Son to come, a helpless Babe, subject to the weakness of humanity. He permitted him to meet life's peril in common with every human soul, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, at the risk of failure and eternal loss. —Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* p. 49.