



FRED BISCHOFF
adventist pioneer library

FIRST LAW

IT WAS CRUCIFIXION week. Matthew and Mark recorded the story (Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34). A Pharisee (lawyer and scribe) asked Jesus a profound question that could be referred to as the first law. “Which is the greatest commandment in the law? Which is the first commandment of all?” With no hesitation, Jesus pointed to the secret of unity in plurality, of oneness when more than one is present. To love the Lord our God with all, that is the greatest, the first. Because of who our God is, His image shows that “let us” can be “one” (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:24; Deuteronomy 6:4-5).

John caught the dynamic behind the command, “We love him, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Moses also made this point (Deuteronomy 7:7). God does not expect us to do something He does not do Himself. This love encompasses everything from righteous living to sacrificially dying. So if His love is the very ground of our love for

Him, we should spend more time contemplating what it includes and its dimensions.

Surely this love embraces unity. In fact, as *one* implies, the fruit of this love is oneness that comes only from unselfishness. And within each *kind* of creation, this love reveals equality. There is a mutual submission and humility that makes self-exaltation impossible. In relating to lower *kinds*, this love reveals gentleness, care, and nurturing. There is no hint of exploitation or manipulation.

But does this love also know how to relate to higher *kinds*? Yes, it affirms that the creature is ever submissive to the Creator, knowing His love is consistent, though not always understood. And the higher *kinds* of creation are respected for the positions the Creator has given them. (Consider the amazing implications of how to relate even to fallen higher orders of beings taught in Jude 8, 9.)

It should be evident from the above that this first law produces obedience, self-government, and harmony. However, we are

sinners in whom this image of God was “well-nigh obliterated” (*Education*, p. 15). Probably the hardest thing for us to see is that this love actually produces order and organization. We can be incorrigibly independent and individualistic.

So what should we do, inhabitants of a planet where this first law was rejected by our first parents? We must study carefully the character of the One who created us, especially tracing the revelation of brilliant light in the humility and submission of the Son, the affirmation and clarification of the order and responsibility that *agape* brings, so we can be cured of our innate rebellion with its two extremes of abuse and neglect.

(For further study see *Signs of the Times*, April 1, 1897, paragraph 4; August 1, 1900, paragraph 12; *Review and Herald*, June 10, 1902, paragraph 1; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 200; *Counsels to Teachers*, p. 403.)



JEFFREY ROSARIO
speaker

DUBAI'S FUTURE PREACHER

A FEW MONTHS ago I had the privilege of traveling to Dubai to speak at a revival meeting that was organized by a small group of young Adventists. Though I have travelled in other countries with a significant Muslim presence (Jordan, Turkey, Israel), Dubai seemed unusual; like a city that was still trying to figure out its own identity. I've never really been drawn to it in spite of all the hype.

Most of Dubai is calculated to impress. It is one of the richest cities in the world, and one of the fastest growing. It is home to the world's tallest building, the Burj Khalifa, which towers above the city at 2,722 feet and contains the world's highest mosque, highest restaurant, and highest nightclub. Then there's Burj

Al Arab, the world's only 5 star hotel rated as a 7 star where the Royal Suite will cost you about \$20,000 per night. If you get bored in your luxury hotel room, you can always head out to the Dubai Mall—and yes, it is the largest shopping mall in the world.

All this hype makes Dubai a melting pot for people from around the world eager for a chance in the bustling job market.

For me, that screams evangelism.

As part of the United Arab Emirates, Dubai is in a Muslim country where there are certain restrictions regarding religious liberties for other religions. Christians are allowed to meet for worship, but only in compounds specifically designated by the municipality. The compound where we met on Sabbath morning is comprised of several rooms, which are shared by Catholics, Orthodox, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and Seventh-day Adventists.

In a city where only about 17% of the population is of Arab descent, the rest of the population are immigrants, the Adventist church also reflects this dynamic—basically 99% percent of the membership are from the Philippines, with a few Africans.

During my visit, I met Karim. He is an anomaly; the only Adventist of Arab descent in the whole church. Karim was born in Lebanon and raised in a Greek Orthodox family. As a child, he was dedicated to all things church; helping the priest prepare the bread for communion, carrying the candles, the cross, and the other icons used during Sunday

MOSTLY FOREIGN

It is estimated that 10 to 15 percent of Dubai's population are Emiratis, while the other 85% are expatriates (foreigners). The majority come from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

Business Insider

STATE RELIGION

Article 7 of the UAE's Provisional Constitution declares Islam the official state religion of the Union.

ADVENTISTS IN DUBAI

Dubai is in the Gulf Field of the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission.

The territory includes 7 different countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

The Gulf Field has only 7 pastors and 14 churches with a total of about 1,350 members.



HE COULD NEVER SHAKE OFF THE CHRISTIAN IDEALS HE WAS TAUGHT BY HIS PARENTS.

Mass. Everyone thought he would become a priest himself.

Throughout his teens, Karim's family faced difficult financial struggles as the result of Lebanon being embroiled in a long civil war at home and military tension abroad. Amidst national instability, he had to manage up to three jobs alongside his schoolwork. Around this time he stopped going to church and began to drift away from God.

Eventually, he dropped out of school and, because of his growing interest in music, became a production manager for a music company while working as a DJ in nightclubs.

Then in 2003, a possibility opened for him to go to Dubai. He jumped at the opportunity. But even while working as a DJ in various upscale clubs throughout Dubai, he could never shake off the Christian ideals he was taught by his parents.

Others quickly noticed that he never smoked or used alcohol or drugs, despite many opportunities to do so. He was a really unusual DJ!

It was in one of these clubs that he met his wife. Her parents happen to be Seventh-day Adventists and this led to a close relationship between Karim and his father-in-law. In the many conversations that resulted from that relationship, Karim's father-in-law constantly spoke to him about God. One day he sent Karim a series of DVDs on Bible prophecy that completely amazed him. He was impressed with the emphasis on Scripture.

Through the process of learning more about the teachings of Jesus, Karim began a conversion experience. It's as if he heard someone telling him, "Are you listening?" After devouring the DVDs, he continued to study the Bible. Everything made so much sense; it had a ring of truth

in it. In February of this year, Karim was baptized.

Today, Karim is happily married and has a beautiful daughter. But his story is far from over. The journey has just begun. He is still a popular DJ in one of the premiere cities in the world, and though he has been a powerful witness in that scene, he knows it is not ideal; he wants out. He's planning to soon quit his job and begin his studies to enter the ministry.

I had the privilege of having lunch with him as he shared his story with me. I can see it in his eyes. His passion is evident. He's a preacher in the making. I'm excited to watch how God turns this young DJ into an evangelist to preach in a part of the world that needs to hear the everlasting gospel!

COME SEE US!

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