



THE WHOLE STORY: FROM LA CHAUX-DE-FONDS TO LOS ANGELES

Who we are is the result of our “story.” This story encompasses the environment in which we were born, how we were received by our family and educated by our parents and schools, how we were affected and guided by those around us, and how we affected others. This small biography describes the intellectual and spiritual awakening that changed the first author’s life forever! Nothing happened by chance in this amazing journey at the University of Life.

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

—Psalm 139:13–16



αΩ.1 EARLY CHALLENGES: SETTING THE STAGE

Albin and Agnès

My parents both grew up in rural areas of Switzerland. My father, Albin, was born in 1931 to a family of farmers. Despite his deep love for farming and animals, when he came of age he had to look for job opportunities elsewhere because his older brothers were going to run the farm. My mother, Agnès, endured a tough childhood under authoritarian parents who ran a small bakery and grocery store. Despite her love for reading and learning, when she came of age she was forced by her parents to learn sewing in a boarding school. My parents therefore shared a similar but too common story in the sense that they had to follow a different professional path than the one they would have chosen. They married in 1955 after meeting at a wine festival when my father was 24 and my mother was 21. While they were dating, my father would cycle 100 km from Geneva to visit her in the country on the weekends; my mother sewed her own wedding dress.



Albin and Agnès Magne civil wedding in Geneva (1955).

Marina, Michel, and me: Life around jail from La Chaux-de-Fonds to Neuchâtel

My sister, Marina, was born in Geneva on January 1, 1956, precisely 47 years before my daughter was born in the same city. Later that year my father accepted a job as adjunct jailor in the city of La Chaux-de-Fonds, and our family started our jailhouse adventure. My brother, Michel, was born there in 1958, and I was born in 1966, a month after Easter.

My parents chose the name Pascal, which means *Passover* (from the Hebrew *Pesach* or Greek *Pascha*). As a newborn, I was extremely underweight because my pylorus did not work properly, so I would regurgitate all my food. Despite feeling helpless, my mother persevered and fed me every hour. It was undoubtedly a



Pascal and mother in Lake Neuchâtel (1966).

very difficult time for the whole family. It was my first struggle with life, but thanks to the love and dedication of my parents, I made it through.

We later moved into a service apartment located in the jail building, where both my

parents were involved. My mother helped to organize meals for the inmates, my sister sometimes accompanying her in the jail garden, and would also help in the kitchen or in admission of female inmates. At home, like many working-class women in that area, she assembled parts for watchmaking companies, unknowingly handling radioactive luminescent material containing radium. (My mother died of lung cancer in 1997.)

In January 1969, my father was promoted to Jail Director in the nearby city of Neuchâtel, and our service apartment was connected to the 30-cell jail via intercom. I still like to joke with my friends that we grew up in jail; our entire family life would run at the rhythm of the jail schedule. Because my dad was so courageous and compassionate with the inmates, whom he called his “guests,” those guests would later greet my dad by his first name as we walked the streets of Neuchâtel.

My brother’s influence and my career choice

Upon finishing his mandatory school in the mid 1970s, my brother, Michel, began an apprenticeship at a dental laboratory. Despite his previous ambivalence about art, he was immediately filled with passion for dental technology, especially morphology and ceramics. For his final exams to become a dental technician, Michel had to fabricate a ceramic incrustation “riveted” into a gold framework. He fell in love with porcelain and decided that dental ceramist would be his call. Today he would describe it as 3D painting.

As a child I always looked up to my big brother, and he has undoubtedly had quite an influence on who I am today. During my high school years, Michel attended lectures with Dr Harold Shavell (from Chicago) and Mr Willi Geller (from Zurich). He was always sharing with me the photographic slides he took during those lectures. Dr Shavell’s amazing amalgam sculptures and Mr Geller’s lifelike porcelain were going to stay deeply imprinted in my brain. Michel was excelling in porcelain, generating an enormous amount of full-arch works as an in-house technician in

various dental offices. I was struck by the beauty of his works.

Before making a final choice of career, I decided to spend 1 week shadowing my own dentist in Neuchâtel. I fell in love with what I saw—the meticulous work, the small instruments, especially endodontics. I enrolled at the “Faculté de Médecine.”

But I almost quit the first week. I was sitting in a class about genetics and could not understand a single word. I was devastated and told my parents that I would never make it. Thank God I persevered, instead completing my first year with the best grades of my class. I had developed a unique study method in which I would generate typed-out summaries of my class notes and then further summarize those (also typewritten). Those documents were so condensed and succinct that they became known to the student body and were shared by students during many years to follow (including my nephew 13 years later!). This study method would accompany me for the rest of my career.

During the summer break of 1985, I found a job in an industrial butchery. The work was brutal, and my hands were frozen. But each day after work, I would pass by this computer store. One day there was a new computer in the window, so I went in to check it out. When the salesperson started to move the cursor with what he called a “mouse,” I was totally stunned. I had never used a computer, and I could not believe what I was seeing. I was already dreaming about how this tool would help me in my new study method. Of



Pascal and Michel (May 1967).

course this computer was the Apple Macintosh, and with a display of 256×256 pixels, 64 kB of RAM (no hard drive), and an 8-bit processor, the device was selling at \$2,500 (would be equivalent to \$6,400 today). I decided to go for it. That

computer was going to be my study partner for the next 7 years. Thank God university tuition fees in Switzerland were minimal and my parents were going to be able to support me entirely.

$\alpha\Omega.2$ EARLY ACADEMIC LIFE AND THE BROTHERS

The big move to Geneva School of Dental Medicine – Becoming a DMD

I left home for the first time in the fall of 1985 for my second year of medicine in Geneva. The separation from my parents felt like a tear in my heart. I would study hard during the week and jump on the train back to Neuchâtel to spend the weekends with my family. At school I was a good student but not a great one. I had to work much harder than my classmates to get the same results. My driving force was my determination to complete my studies as efficiently as possible to remove from my parents the burden of financial support.

I remember very well my first patient. It was during emergency services. The young woman was a drug addict and had left her dog in her car to come to the appointment. I was trying so hard to complete the caries cleanup and place a temporary restoration, and she was getting impatient, worried about her dog. It was intense. It reminded me of that first day at university 3 years earlier. ***I could have abandoned it all. But here again, perseverance and study allowed me to break through.***

I became a DMD at age 23 in the summer of 1989. For my final practical exam, I had to do two amalgam restorations, two anterior Class 3 composite resin restorations, a full crown preparation including provisional acrylic crown, and an extraction. Many of my classmates and I were immediately hired by the school as teaching faculty, especially at the preclinical level. I had applied for faculty positions in both Conservative Dentistry and Fixed Prosthodontics. I was



Second year of dental school in Geneva (1987).

unsure about this and had also planned to return to Neuchâtel and practice there as an associate. I was first hired part-time in the Division of Restorative Dentistry in Geneva, which would allow me to work part-time in my hometown. However, during my last days at school, I came across Professor Urs Belser in the stairway. He had previously told me there was no available position in his division (Fixed Prosthodontics), yet he announced to me that day that he decided to hire me after all. It was rare to be hired in both divisions, which allowed me to become immediately a full-time lecturer. It was the fall

of 1989, and I was able to start my career without a loan. Young hires had to teach preclinical courses for several years before being allowed to teach in the patients' clinics. In the Division of Restorative Dentistry, I joined the team of Dr Didier Dietschi (my mentor and true friend) and immediately started to work on a master thesis about dentin-resin bonding of porcelain onlays. In the Division of Fixed Prosthodontics, I started to work on full-mouth rehabilitation cases.

Professional turning point – A new call

While my thesis was moving along very well under the direction of Didier, I was frustrated by my clinical works. Even though Dr Belser always insisted on working with highly qualified dental technicians, the PFM crowns and bridges we were getting did not look natural in the mouth. I was also shocked by some of the failures of sophisticated works performed by experienced and extremely talented clinicians (ie, ceramic and root fractures, etc). Something was missing. I started to question whether I could practice this profession for the rest of my life.

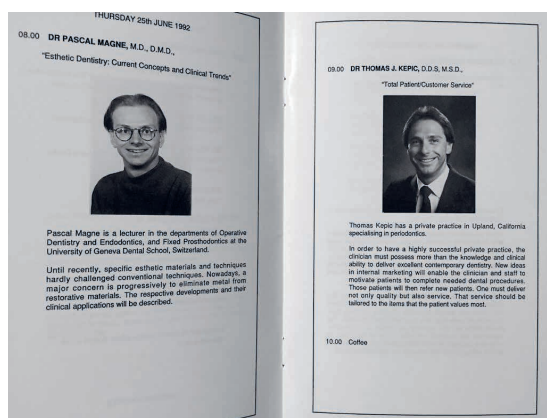
In those days, Michel was in-house technician for a dentist in the beautiful city of Montreux. In 1991, Prof Belser came to me and mentioned this very talented dental technician from Basel who was looking for a talented dentist to work on a series of anterior crown cases to present a new porcelain that he developed. His name was Claude Sieber, and the porcelain was Vitadur Alpha (for layering over aluminum oxide framework). Claude came to Geneva to meet us and we immediately started a series of approximately 10 cases. ***For the first time I could see firsthand the porcelain of a master inside the mouth of my own patients.*** Claude also inspired me with his photography. Of course I had seen pictures of the amazing cases of my brother but had not worked with him yet. Claude's work was stunning and I came to realize that I was working with one of the best ceramists on the planet.

But the real turning point happened a year later, in 1992, when Michel finally opened his



Michel in his first laboratory, Oral Design Center Montreux (1992).

own dental laboratory in Montreux—Oral Design Center Montreux, a name chosen at the insistence of Willi Geller himself. As we worked on our first case together—[restoration of large fractures on maxillary central incisors \(the patient displayed in Fig 7-1\)](#)—we were faced with a tough decision. Both teeth were vital, but there was not enough coronal structure left for the resistance and retention form of a crown. I remember sitting with Prof Belser and discussing our options. The patient had previous composite resin restorations that had worked well and only needed replacement because of discoloration. Bonding had been successful with composite resin restorations, and it could be successful again. Hence we decided to keep the same strategy but use porcelain instead of composite resin restorations. This first case was also our [first two type III bonded porcelain restorations \(see classification in Table 6-1\)](#). How could we dare bond 5 mm of freestanding porcelain on an incisal edge? Famous educators at that time were warning of the risks of placing more than 2 mm of porcelain on an incisal edge. In addition, I had never learned how to do porcelain veneers before. It was daring but it made complete sense. Prof Belser approved. Even though dentin was largely exposed on the incisal edges, we bonded those two veneers exclusively to the enamel. Those restorations are still in function as I am writing these lines, 29 years later.



Program of my first international lecture in Vilamoura (Portugal, 1992), where I met Dr Thomas Kopic from Los Angeles.

The idea of bonding large nonretentive porcelain restorations was provocative, but it was a game changer, and I never looked back or questioned my professional choice. Michel and I kept working on cases and refining our technique, especially the previsualization of our goals through sophisticated mock-ups and provisional restorations. Michel had already developed this amazing bilaminar sandwich technique for acrylic provisional restorations, and he was also using a similar strategy for the [porcelain buildups \(dentin base, cutback, characterization, enamel skin, etc; see Fig 6-67\)](#). We started to be invited by local study clubs. It was work hard and play hard, skiing and playing tennis together during the weekends. Prof Belser understood the synergy between us brothers, and he was a fuel for my creativity. My master thesis with Didier Dietschi was going well and had revealed the

limitations of dentin bonding when luting indirect restorations. The dentin-resin hybrid layer seemed crushed during the seating of the restoration, and we could not figure out a solution until 1995, when Dr Stefan Paul from the University of Zurich introduced us to the dual-bonding technique.

In 1992, I was invited for my first international lecture in Vilamoura, Portugal, for the American Dental Society of Europe. I presented the cases made with Claude Sieber as well as our first cases with Michel. I also met a periodontist who was on the same program page, Dr Thomas Kopic from Los Angeles. Little did I know that we would become friends for life and even neighbors 12 years later.

Two years later, Michel and I were invited to our first international congress together in Paris. David Garber and Frank Spear were in the room, and as a result we were invited for our first lecture on American soil in 1996 for the prestigious American Academy of Restorative Dentistry. I could handle lecturing in French or Italian back then, but our English was a disaster and we were terrified. We spent the whole night before the lecture reading and rereading our English script that I had written for us. Michel barely even read the script. But we had to go on. Urs Belser introduced our lecture. We struggled so much to speak, and I felt the audience was suffering with us. But their compassion and our didactic material and pictures saved us that day, and because of that lecture, we were going to be invited a lot more to this side of the pond.

αΩ.3 TOUCHED BY GOD

A life-changing experience was going to happen in 1995. It started with my mother being diagnosed with cancer in 1994. She had decided to fight the disease as hard as she could. My parents had just retired after 25 years of intense and faithful service at the prison of Neuchâtel. It was bad; it was an advanced form of cancer,

and it was clear she was not going to survive it. But she had decided to face the devastating effects of treatment in order to extend her time with us. I knew I would soon have to face for the first time the departure of a loved one. In an incredible turn of events, while she was going through a relatively good phase in December

1996, I was able to bring my parents with me to New York, where I was lecturing for the Greater New York Academy of Prosthodontics. They had never visited another continent before. What a treat it was to have them in the audience while I was giving my lecture to this prestigious group; they were so proud. Dr Vincent Celenza had invited me, and he was so thoughtful with my parents. We went to a Broadway musical, and we watched the city from the top of the Empire State Building. This was going to be her last trip.

The church

My brother had experienced some big changes too. One of his three beautiful daughters, Julie, had been asking questions about Jesus, and his wife, wanting to provide the right answers, ended up joining a Bible study group. Catherine was changed by this process and started attending church, even prioritizing this above Michel himself. After being asked by Julie to join her and her mother at church, a once-suspicious Michel eventually joined the Bible study group too. He was going through a strong spiritual experience. While we were traveling together for our lectures, he would tell me about his God. He would also tell me about his brothers and sisters at church. One day he mentioned that his relationship with those brothers seemed to supersede our own relationship; this shocked and intrigued me. After all I was his true brother, or was there a new definition implied?

In December of 1994, I was spending the holiday with my brother's family, and they invited me to join their church for one of their weekly gatherings. I was fascinated by the simplicity of this assembly. I always thought churches were buildings. ***This day I realized that the church is people. The building was not important.*** This church was in fact a simple room located in an industrial area of the city. No statues, no decoration, no distractions. A blank room with just chairs and a pulpit. People started to pray freely. All of this was new to me. Anybody could pray and use his or her own voice at any time. The prayers were as beautiful and diverse as the people.

Nobody was reading from a prayer book. It was all inspired. What an experience.

This day, instead of a message, a movie about the life of Corrie Ten Boom was presented called *The Hiding Place*. During WWII, the Ten Booms had saved numerous Jews by hiding them in a small secret room behind a false wall in Corrie's room; they were eventually caught and sent to prison and then to a concentration camp. But Corrie and Betsie, her sister, would hold secret worship services with a Bible that had been smuggled in. Her parents and two siblings died in the camp, and 1 week after being miraculously released due to a clerical error, Corrie learned that all the women in her age group were sent to the gas chamber. Of course this story is a touching one, but what struck me most was that this woman, after losing all she had, stated that God had given enough love for her to forgive her enemies, which she did in writing and in person for at least two guards who had survived. She had lost everything but her faith in God. At the end of the gathering I met with the pastor and he gave me two books: a Bible, of course, and another little French book called "De la parole aux actes" (translated "From words to deeds"). The book was asking simple questions: Is there a God? If yes, who is this God? Do you know him? Does he know you? All those questions were going to resonate in my head for the next 6 months.

The investigative journey

My parents were moderate Catholics. I remember my mother praying to the various saints depending on our needs (ie, protection during travel, lost things, etc). As such, they had sent us through the regular sacraments of Roman Catholicism, infant baptism, confirmation, and first communion. I know I believed in the existence of God because I too would pray for my various needs. But I had no clue as to who he was and if he even knew me. I discovered I was agnostic (a person who believes that nothing is known or can be known of the existence or nature of God). But I soon decided that I could not remain in this

state of mind. My analytical thoughts were going to guide me on a journey of discovery of what I called “the spiritual marketplace.”

Although my Catholic background was tied to Christianity, I wanted to investigate other faiths and beliefs, from Islam and Judaism to Buddhism, as well as expand my knowledge of Christianity beyond Catholicism. It was a fascinating journey of reading, consulting with friends from different cultures, and processing all the knowledge in the most logical way possible. I made amazing discoveries and continue to do so today. The most intriguing element was the presence and acknowledgment of the person of Jesus Christ all across those beliefs and scriptures. Muslims can read about the life of Jesus in the Quran. Isa (Jesus) is not only mentioned 25 times (Mohammad only 4 times) but is presented as a prophet, the greatest and ultimate prophet, spirit from God, and even word from God. The Quran even mentions other people from the Bible such as John the Baptist, Moses, and Abraham (Ibrahim). I also discovered obvious analogies between Jesus and Buddha, the main characteristics being about love (loving others, loving your enemies, turning the other cheek). Some Buddhists even perceive Buddha and Jesus as brothers. The Tanak (Hebrew Bible, Old Testament) is full of references about the Messiah. When reading the Isaiah Scroll, chapter 53, the description of Jesus Christ is striking and undisputable, even though it was written 700 years BC.

It was fascinating to discover so many similarities between the main sacred texts. All my findings were pointing in the same direction—a man named Yeshua, Isa, or Jesus, which means “God saves.”

I was now ready to go back to my original questions. I always believed God existed, yes. God wanted to connect with me, yes. He did this by making himself a human being, Jesus Christ. This man had really existed, yes. He was definitely a wise man and a prophet, yes. Now everything was making sense. While studying the words and acts of Jesus, there was nothing

wrong I could find about him. He was a human being like myself, able to feel emotions and pains like myself. But he was pure, not like myself. God had provided a model for humanity. ***The Bible was going to become what it stands for (B-I-B-L-E): my Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth. An encyclopedia for life.*** As I started a basic Bible study, with a newly found church in Geneva, I was able to discover and understand many stories that I did not even know about.

One more thing... the ultimate element

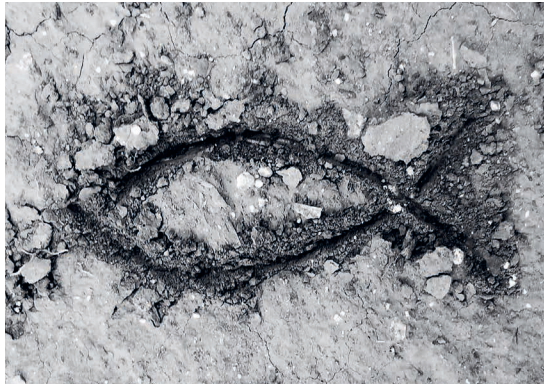
One last element that I needed to understand was the death of Jesus and the principle of atonement (reconciliation of God and humankind through sacrificial death). Why would this human model have to die and be sacrificed so brutally, nailed to a pole of wood? Now I came to realize what my name, Pascal, really meant. Before Jesus, animal sacrifices were used to satisfy God for offenses committed against Him. In Leviticus 17:11, God said to Moses: “For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourself on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life.” ***The same blood of a spotless lamb had been used by the Israelites during the first Passover (the Pass-over Lamb) in Egypt, to protect their firstborns from the tenth plague (death) and to allow them to be freed from slavery and walk out toward the promised land. It was the Paschal sacrifice.***

Throughout the Old Testament, God had promised to provide an ultimate lamb, as foretold in the story of Abraham and Isaac as well as in the book of Isaiah. Jesus’s death bore the wrath of God, preserved the lives of all who trust Him, and gave freedom to the former slaves of sin.

What a discovery: the Old and New Testaments were telling the same story. The Old Covenant (laws of Moses) had not been fulfilled, and hence God provided a New Covenant; because of the ultimate Paschal lamb, Jesus Christ, no more animal sacrifices were going to be required. What great news! When the thick heavy veil separating man from the Holy of Holies in the temple was



Paschal. Ink and paper collage on photographic paper by Michel Magne.



Symbol of the fish carved in the ground.



Baptism certificate.

torn, access to God was given to all, Jews and Gentiles. This was mind-blowing to me. But it was going to be only the tip of the iceberg of discoveries from the scriptures.

Jesus was the only person who had fulfilled all Old Testament messianic prophecies. Above all, Jesus was a model not only with his life but also through his death and resurrection. ***From the beginning, God did not need to rest, but he did rest on the seventh day and enjoyed his creation; so should we. Jesus did not need to be baptized, but he was baptized by John the Baptist; so should we. Jesus overcame temptation; so should we. Jesus died and resurrected; so will we: “He will revive us after two days, and on the third day he will raise us up so we can live in his presence.” (Hosea 6:2, dated 760–720 BC).***

Opening my heart to the truth

My investigation had been as inclusive and comprehensive as can be, and I had come to a conclusion. The Holy Bible (Old and New Covenants) was telling the truth. When an evangelist visiting from England made a call for people to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior at my church in May of 1995, I opened my heart to Him that day. It was going to be the best decision of my life.

The fish and a soulmate for life

Now that I had access to the infinite resource of love coming from above (by God the Father) and materialized below (by Jesus the Son), I knew my life was going to change. Above all, I had a new weapon—prayer—and this prayer was going to be answered rapidly. One of my students introduced me to this beautiful Peruvian woman, Geibi, who had been coming to the Dental School in Geneva as a patient. She had come from Peru at age 19 to learn French. She was 24 and I was 29. One of my best friends had married a Peruvian woman, and because we had regular weekend parties with mixed crowds of Swiss and South American people, I invited Geibi to come along in the summer of 1995. When she saw the fish sticker near my license plate, I thought I’d have to explain that the fish was *ichthus*, a Christian symbol representing Jesus Christ. But there was no need; I quickly learned that Geibi herself had accepted Christ 5 years before. It was like a thunderbolt. Our 45-minute ride to Lausanne was going to be very interesting. We did not socialize too much with the others that evening but instead shared about our respective spiritual journeys. She later became my wife and still is today, 25 years later. My love for her has not faded thanks to our common source of “agape” (unconditional love) coming from above. While life was not going to be easy every day like any other couple, we would have this shared model to look at for guidance in our relationship.

Born of water and spirit

Before thinking about getting married, I wanted to get baptized again as a personal step of obedience to Christ and to publicly profess my faith. I was going to do it properly, so on November 19, 1995, I was born of water and the spirit by full immersion. ***Just as a physical mirror is used to see your physical image, the Bible was***

going to be my spiritual mirror to see my spiritual reflection.

The years to follow were going to be blessed beyond my imagination. There was a fire in me to share my spiritual awakening. It felt as if I had just won the lottery and I wanted to share the winning number with everyone. But my faith would soon be tested.

αΩ.4 THE MINNESOTA EXPERIENCE

Reality check

Prof Urs Belser had been mentoring me all along. He had carefully nurtured my professional growth and had always guided me when I needed it. He was not a boss but a true leader and mentor, and I could see the pride in his eyes like that of a father for a son. One day in early 1996, when I was 30, he asked me about my career path and where I was heading. I had been thinking about it but he nailed an important question that I was going to have to answer sooner or later: Was my path going to be academic, mixed, or toward private practice? He made it very clear that if I was going to choose academia, I would have to step up my research profile significantly, and that meant getting a grant, finding an institution abroad, and going on a full-time research scholarship. My mother was still very sick and getting chemotherapy, I was still dating Geibi, and the prospect of leaving Switzerland was not a welcome one at that time.

In the summer of 1996, I decided to take advantage of an invitation to lecture for the first time at the American Academy of Esthetic Dentistry to visit a few American dental schools. One of them was the University of Minnesota, especially the Minnesota Dental Research Center for Biomaterials and Biomechanics (MDRCBB). Why Minneapolis? Well, I had read the paper by Morin, DeLong, and Douglas about “Cusp reinforcement by the acid-etch technique”

(1984), and I was fascinated by the experimental approach using force displacement and strain gauge testing. They had also developed a unique chewing machine for fatigue testing. Finally, they had pioneered the use of numeric simulation using finite element analysis. During my visit, Dr William Douglas impressed me immediately with his kindness and openness about my projects. He has also noticed my little fish pin and said he liked it very much. He, too, was a man of faith. Upon explaining what my plan would be for my research at the MDRCBB, he simply replied, ***“What you are trying to achieve, Pascal, is called biomimetics.”*** I was not going to dwell on the tissue engineering part of it but simply try to investigate the best materials and techniques available ***to mimic the perfect model given by God, the natural tooth with its beautiful enamel, dentin, and dentinoenamel junction.*** Dr Douglas and I were exactly on the same wavelength, not only about dental research but also spiritually. What a match! God had just provided an additional mentor, a research mentor.

A leap of faith, a prayer answered, and a wedding

The Minnesota visit was the first step in the process, and it had a positive outcome. Now equipped with two strong mentors, I submitted my project to the Swiss Science Foundation and it was accepted for a grant. It seemed that the



Wedding day in Pucallpa, Peru (March 1998).



Newlyweds back in Minnesota (1998).

doors were opening, but it was going to be a painful decision to leave for Minnesota given the precarious health of my mother. Getting on that plane in May of 1997 was a big leap of faith. It was overwhelming to leave behind my parents, my friends, and Geibi. I would communicate with my parents via fax and with Geibi via email through a third-party friend with a computer.

I had just started setting up my research project when my brother called me on June 25, 1997: "Pascal, come back as soon as you can, get on the next plane, Mom is not doing well." She had been hospitalized because her situation was worsening. I jumped on the first flight to Geneva. Michel picked me up at the airport and we drove to see my mom in Neuchâtel. She was in her room, peaceful, waiting for all of us to be present. We had a great time talking, and then we left her to have dinner. When we returned, she was in coma. She died the next day, June 28. The little wall calendar in her room had a Bible verse on it. ***The verse that day said: "In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me." (Psalm 120:1).*** As she took her last breath and went to the Lord, we were all praying around her bed. Geibi was there too. It became clear that my mother had been waiting for the family to be together. She had told me before that she was at peace with God and that I would have to be patient with my father. God had been so gracious. We had prayed for healing and God had answered by healing her spiritually.

Upon my return to Minnesota, I tried getting back to work. Geibi and I would keep communicating, and in September 1997 I decided to ask her hand officially and flew again to Switzerland for the occasion. In March of 1998, she made the trip from Switzerland to her hometown of Pucallpa, Peru, and I flew from Minneapolis to the Peruvian Amazon for the wedding. In anticipation, I had learned my fifth language, Spanish, via a CD-ROM English-to-Spanish in order to be able to ask properly my wife's hand to her father (her parents speak only Spanish). At first I had to deal with the thermal shock, from the freezing-cold Midwest to the super-hot and humid rainforest tropical weather. Our honeymoon was in Cusco, and of course we also visited Machu Picchu. It was refreshing. My sister and my father made the trip, too. What an amazing experience and discovery of the pre-Columbian culture. I had seen so many people with gold open crowns on their front teeth, which was somewhat appropriate given the overwhelming use of gold decoration in the Inca culture. Geibi and I returned to Minnesota to live together for the first time, at Hennepin Avenue in downtown Minneapolis.

Biomimetic dentistry – The tooth as a model

My projects at the University of Minnesota were advancing very well thanks to the amazing help of Dr Maria Pintado, who was teaching me to



Working at the MDRCBB in Minneapolis (1998).

use the artificial mouth for load experiments, and Antheunis Versluis, who was teaching me finite element analysis. I was learning how to balance my life between work and my new responsibilities as a husband. God was so good to us. Another prayer was going to be answered. It

was becoming obvious that we'd need to stay for another year for all my work to come to fruition. My first year had focused on studying the stresses and deformation in the anterior natural intact tooth, and I needed more time to look at restored anterior teeth. These two steps were essential in the biomimetic approach. ***After all, like Jesus, who is a model for humanity in life, natural teeth with their magnificent structure of dentin and enamel had become a model for restorative dentistry in the biomimetic approach.***

During my 2-year Minnesota experience, not only did I produce over 15 research articles, but I had learned that prioritization was key, placing God first (the first commandment), then my wife and my family, then maybe my work. I was going to learn that whenever I disrespected this important principle, I could not expect to be blessed. On the other hand, applying this principle would lead to countless blessings.

αΩ.5 GENEVA TO LOS ANGELES

Back to Geneva – A PD and a book... and a baby

With all my work completed in Minnesota, it was time to return to Geneva in the summer of 1999. We were so excited because my father had just found a companion to share their last chapter of life on earth. It was a blessing to both of them. I was back to my academic duties at the university and so excited to be back with my students and treating patients with my brother while working on two major projects: my second doctorate thesis (called PD, or Privat Docent, in Switzerland) and my first book. The thesis was going to be a collection of my publications, while the book was the “clinical version” of the PD. For several years, Mr HorstWolfgang Haase at Quintessence Publishing had been asking me about writing a book for them, and because all my scientific questions about bonded ceramic restorations had been answered in Minnesota, I felt I was

ready. Those two projects were going to challenge my priorities, and God was going to teach me about it. Prof Belser had kept supporting me and guiding me along the process of the PD, and I successfully defended my thesis in 2001. The book followed immediately after in 2002.



With Prof Urs Belser working on the first edition of the book in Geneva (2001).



Erine in utero at 13 weeks (2003).

But the most amazing gift was going to be next. In February 2003, we learned that Geibi was pregnant. It was a Saturday, and Geibi was leaving to visit her parents in Peru. We decided to keep it secret until the 3-month mark. The day after Geibi had left, I went to church by myself, and after the service, an older woman of the church came up to me. I did not know her very well, but she said, “Pascal, I had a vision during prayer, and it was for you. The vision was a triangular shape that was transforming into a beautiful white flower. I don’t know what it means, but you will.” It was like being struck by lightning, because as she was speaking I could see the triangle as the female reproductive organ, the uterus, and the beautiful white flower as a baby girl. Sure enough, at 20 weeks of pregnancy we were told it was a girl. When exploring names, we were looking at names of white flowers; one was Nerine, and it inspired us to call our daughter Erine. She was born on October 19, 2003.

Dr Hal Slavkin invitation

During the summer of 2002, I was contacted by Harold Slavkin, the Dean of the University of Southern California (USC) School of Dentistry at the time. He was looking for a faculty hire with a dual profile, as much interested in clinical dentistry as research. Above all, he wanted someone who would contribute to the teaching of esthetic and adhesive dentistry. He had

heard about the Magne brothers from Dr Cherilyn Sheets, a member of the USC dental school’s Board of Counselors, who had told Hal about the Magne brothers. Los Angeles had never been the place of my dreams, but Geibi and I decided to explore the possibility. Prof Belser insisted that we take the offer seriously. During my first visit, Dean Slavkin and I had fantastic discussions about biomimetics and the endeavors of the USC Center for Craniofacial Molecular Biology. The second visit was with my wife in January 2003, and the third was with my brother on our way to a lecture in San Francisco. Dr Slavkin gave us a very good idea of what life in California could look like. We were very much impressed by the Venice/Santa Monica area. The ocean and the beaches were not something easy to find in Switzerland.

Big move, big challenges...

Geibi gave birth to Erine in Geneva, and 4 months later we packed all our belongings into a 12-foot container, and the three of us were on our way to Los Angeles for a new chapter of our lives. It was not going to be easy, especially for my wife who would find herself with an infant in temporary housing in Marina Del Rey, with no friends and no family to help. Again I was busy at the university setting up all my academic activities and did not see how difficult it was for Geibi at home. We found a nice place to live in Santa Monica where she was able to stroll around safely with baby Erine, but it took more than 3 years for us to overcome this very challenging move.

In early 2005, Michel and two other dental technicians from Europe decided to accept an offer by Dean Slavkin to join USC and build an in-house laboratory for the dental school. The project was daring and promising, and for the first time Michel and I were going to be able to work together under the same roof. Above all, the school would have a top-notch dental laboratory with highly skilled ceramists to increase the exposure of the dental technician’s work. One of my struggles in the United States has always been that dental laboratories are considered a trade

partner rather than a health partner. Michel and I hope that we may have slightly contributed to alleviate this problem by establishing a high-level laboratory within the university where students can interact with skilled ceramists and see first-hand how dental technicians work. Even though it is taking a long time, it is encouraging to see that the best restorative dentists and prosthodontists now understand that their work is worth no more than that of their dental technician. This had been our message all along when lecturing together. ***We would often use the analogy that a skilled dentist with a poor ceramist is like a race-car equipped with the wheels of a basic sedan.***



Erine holding Santiago in Santa Monica (2010).

Geibi and I visited several communities before finding our place at Hope Church Santa Monica, where we have been worshipping for the last 10 years. Life is better when you have a family in Christ. In January 2010, Geibi was pregnant again, this time with a little boy. My father was so happy to finally have someone who could potentially carry his name through (my sister took the name of her husband and my brother had three daughters). Little did we know that summer 2010 was going to be a tough one.

I was on my way to a lecture in Europe in June, and I had stopped to visit my father in Neuchâtel. He had suffered minor strokes in relation to treatment of his cardiac arrhythmia, but there were no sequelae. A month later, he had a carotid blockage and was admitted at the hospital, and the next day he was in coma. Michel and I

immediately flew back home and barely made it in time to say goodbye before he passed away. My father, Albin, was not able to meet my son, whom we decided to name Santiago Albin. I was confused about what just happened, a funeral again and then 2 months later, Santiago's birth. I had doubts about my father's faith; I had been challenged by many projects at work and my brain was overflowing with emotions. One day, my best friend in Switzerland sent me a message. He had been cleaning up his email inbox and had found a message that I had sent in June, just after I had visited my father. In this message I was telling my best friend how happy I was because during our discussions, my father had accepted the authority of the Bible as the word of God. He had previously denied it, but during that visit in June, 1 month before he died, he had told me otherwise. Somehow I had completely forgotten about this, and God answered my doubt through my friend.

We have adapted to life in Los Angeles, and we have been abundantly blessed. The multi-ethnic and multicultural nature of LA is impressive, and we thank God that we have been able to keep our children connected to their roots, both Swiss and Peruvian. God has helped us to



Family vacation in Ucayali, Peru, which is in the high Amazon rainforest where Geibi grew up (December 2013).



Family winter break in old town Neuchâtel (December 2017). On the left is the prison tower attached to the service apartment where Pascal grew up.

provide them with a balanced exposure to the reality of this society and the hope in God's promises. I remember one day when I got home, I was tired and discouraged by various challenges at work; I sat on the couch and my son asked me to play with him. I replied, "Sorry dear, I am sad." He looked at me and said, "But Daddy, you believe in Jesus, why are you worried?" I was in shock. My 6-year-old had just set me back on track, and I immediately stood up and went to play with him. What a lesson! God certainly speaks through little children.

If I could impart one thing to you in this book, it wouldn't be how to make a perfect restoration or how to emulate nature in dentistry. It would be to love people where they are and for who they are. ***The biggest challenge in life is to love people while not necessarily loving what they do, how they look, or how they act. This is the definition of unconditional love as modeled by Jesus Christ's love for us. Loving the unloving and unlovely is hard, but this is what we are called to do.***



EPILOGUE

My most recent professional endeavor has been this book. It is nothing short of a miracle that I could complete this giant task. Mr William Hartman from Quintessence Chicago has been encouraging and supportive in ways that I cannot describe. Above all, his prayers have been heard and his team (Leah Huffman, Sue Robinson, and Sue Zubek) is to be praised for the outstanding work accomplished. As a conclusion, I want to share some fundamental thoughts that accompany me whenever I look at humanity, conflicts, and struggles, and try to place them in perspective:

1. *No matter how hard we try to be righteous, we are all imperfect and are all broken to some degree.* But when many broken pieces are brought together, they form a mosaic, a beautiful piece of art. The artist is God. Hence, ***a new definition for perfection on earth should be passion and love; it is what holds together all the broken pieces and produces true art.***
2. *God can always turn something apparently very bad into something very good.* In Genesis 37–50, we read that Joseph had 10 older brothers but his father loved him more than his other sons. The brothers were jealous of Joseph's favor and sold him into slavery. However, God later used Joseph to save his own brothers from starvation after Joseph became a trusted ruler in Egypt. Later, Joseph told his brothers, ***"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good" (Genesis 50:20).***
3. *God does not look on appearance but on the heart.* In this we need to learn from the story of King David. When the first King of Israel, Saul, was disobedient, God prompted prophet Samuel to go to Bethlehem to choose one of Jesse's seven sons as the new anointed king. One after the other, each son was presented as a potential candidate. They were handsome, but the Lord says this: "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; ***for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.***" (1 Samuel 16:6–7). This sounds very much like us. So easy to judge by physical sight! One son, the youngest, was not presented to Samuel because he was unlikely to be chosen; he was not deemed important enough, not impressive by the sight. But God chose the youngest son because of his spiritual sight: Young David was chosen and anointed as the new king at age 16. He would have to wait another 14 years to become the king, and during these 14 years, he was going to be tested and prepared for this task. His loyalty would prove unparalleled, and he would stand as Israel's greatest King. Jesus would eventually be born from the lineage of David.
4. *There is always hope.* Our lives are not limited to life on Earth. We tend to look at things as finite, but God is infinite. This life is only a snapshot of "The Whole Story." Like what a single frame is to a movie. Many people believe that we can die. But this is a lie. ***Our soul lives eternally, and there is nothing to lose in accepting this as the truth. There is a lot to lose in not believing it. Once exposed to the truth, we are all given a choice about how to spend eternity.***



God is speaking to you as follows:

But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul. —Deuteronomy 4:29

Here I am. I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. —Revelation 3:20

I pray that “The Whole Story”—not mine, but that of the mosaic of God as well as His Word—will inspire you and elevate you to new spiritual heights.

Always,

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