

# MINISTRY

*International Journal for Pastors* February 2006

Jesus  
loves you!

*Tell the World!*

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EVERY  
ISSUE

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# MINISTRY

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# PASTORS ARE PEOPLE TOO, AND WE SUFFER THE RESULTS OF THIS SINFUL WORLD JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE.

## We must go on

I had to write to express my appreciation for Dr. James Cress' "Pastor's Pastor" article in the December 2005 issue entitled: "What My Psychiatrist Didn't Tell Me." Brother Jim's pain at the loss of his youngest brother, Dave Cress, is shared by many, including yours truly.

For Jim to open his *heart of hearts* to us and be so vulnerable about his loss was heartwarming and encouraging to me. Pastors are people too, and we suffer the results of this sinful world just like everyone else. I was especially impressed that Jim would share with us, his readers, the fact that he is seeking professional support via a mental health provider, for his grief. This is something many ministers would be very hesitant to do, let alone admit to.

In order for God's ministerial servants to be whole-person healthy, we must take care of ourselves in every respect, and that includes our mental health. Seeking out the services of a psychologist, psychiatrist, or some other qualified mental health clinician is *not* a denial of faith, nor is it a sign of weakness.

My prayer and hope is that those of us who recognize that we need the support of someone professionally prepared to journey with us through the "valley of the shadow" will follow the courageous example of our "Pastor's Pastor."

—Chaplain Bob Burns, Florida Hospital,  
Orlando, Florida USA

## Regular feature?

Thank you for the article by James W. Zackrison, "My Personal Classics: Twenty-one books I wouldn't want to be

without" [December 2005]. I wish that this would be a regular feature in your magazine. I am just out of the seminary and I know that lists like this would be a great benefit to the development of my library. It also may encourage ministers my age to read. I talk to many colleagues my age about reading and often their comments are, "I don't have time," or "Why do I need to read?" Maybe if they saw that those in the top pulpits out there and the leaders of our church were voracious readers they too would be encouraged to read.

Thank you.

—Chad Stuart, Associate Pastor, Calhoun  
Adventist Church, Calhoun, Georgia, USA

## Interesting . . .

Pastor George Rice's "The scapegoat and the law of malicious witness" [December 2005] is interesting but seriously flawed.

His premise, "The scapegoat in the earthly service was a type of Satan" is fundamentally in error. First, in examining the service of the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16, we see that both the Lord's goat and the scapegoat (Heb: Azazel) were identical in all respects. To apply this to the great controversy theme comes perilously close to seeing in the controversy a kind of dualism, whereas the most fundamental difference between Satan and Christ is that between creature and Creator.

Second, the assignment of which goat was to be for the Lord and which was to be the Azazel was done by the High Priest drawing lots. While the action may smack of gambling, reminiscent of a game of chance, the Jews did not

see it that way. They saw behind it the government of God: "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord" (Proverbs 16:33, NKJV).

Pastor Rice does mention that the Azazel "[bears] these sins into the wilderness." To say this, however, is to only hint at the implications of this action. As I make clear in my treatment of the boyhood of the prophet Samuel at the Tabernacle, *Samuel: One Small Light* (Review and Herald, 2002), once the Azazel is released into the wilderness, then he is no longer the congregation's problem. He could conceivably survive to a ripe old age and live happily (for a goat) ever after. The practice demonstrates that once one's sins are forgiven, the best thing to do, to use the modern phrase, is to "let them go."

By the time of Christ, however, the practice had been altered simply because Jerusalem was suffering from the Roman Empire equivalent of urban sprawl and wilderness was running scarce. So it became the practice for the "suitable man" (Leviticus 16:21) accompanying the Azazel to seal its fate by backing it off a designated cliff to a certain death. This may have satisfied an urge for justice, but at the same time demonstrated a presumption on the part of man to do God's work for Him.

As for the notion of malicious witness, Satan does not need to be malicious; he does not even need to exaggerate. From the forests of Rwanda to the corridors of power, at every time in every continent, the catalogue of human sins hardly needs an overzealous prosecutor,  
*continued on page 29*

## Free Subscription

If you're receiving *Ministry* bimonthly and haven't paid for a subscription, it's not a mistake. Since 1928 *Ministry* has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers. We believe, however, that the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace, through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We want to share our aspirations and faith in a way that will provide inspiration and help to you as clergy. We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulder, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you can't use. Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all licensed and/or ordained clergy. Requests should be on church letterhead and addressed to the editorial office.



# The nightmare of numbers—don't let them scare you

**M**y father's voice saved me from the nightmare.

What a nightmare it was! Wherever I turned I saw numbers—ahead of me, to my left and right, and behind me. *Numbers! Numbers! Numbers!* All attempts to escape from them failed. I was trapped.

My father's voice announced that it was time to get up. I have always been a late-night person, which means that I am not the first to get out of bed. Hearing my father's voice was more welcome than the jarring ring of a wind-up alarm clock. This morning I especially welcomed his announcement. My nightmare of numbers was over.

My nightmare was understandable. Several months previously I started working as an accountant for a large corporation in New York City. As the junior member of the team, I had the responsibility of posting the main ledger. The ledger included two large books, and I had to transfer into them numbers from various reports. This task took at least one week, which meant that during that week I saw only numbers. On this particular night the numbers became my enemies. In fact, my father told me that before I woke up he heard me calling out numbers—large numbers—into the millions.

Ministers work with people but cannot avoid numbers, either. How many members do you have in your church? How many come to worship? How many new members joined your church? Did your church reach the budget? What is your baptismal goal for next year? Numbers, numbers, and more numbers. They are all around us and just won't go away.

But are numbers the enemy? Certainly not the numbers we like. If our salary increase is larger than expected, we like the larger number. Grandparents usually do not complain about having

NIKOLAUS SATELMAJER



too many grandchildren. In Jamaica, Pastors Leon B. Wellington and Noel Fraser asked me to participate in a funeral for a one-hundred-four-year-old man. He had (if I remember correctly) 9 children, 54 grandchildren and 104 great-grandchildren. At the funeral we were told how much he loved his family—all of them.

Several articles in this issue refer to numbers. Mark Finley's focuses on, among other things, the number seven—seven areas of church life. Jon Paulien's article challenges us to look behind the numbers—who are the people coming to our churches, and whom are we ignoring? Joel Musvosvi's takes us to the book of Daniel—a book full of numbers—and reminds us that God is personally interested in His people. Numbers can bring to our mind very positive images.

Jesus liked numbers. In Luke 15:3-6 He tells us that 99 and 1 are significant numbers, but (strange as it seems) of them both, the number "1" is the more significant. Jesus had a special affinity for 1—a small number, whether it was one small outwardly insignificant coin (Mark 12:42) or one small child (Matt. 18:2). In Matthew 16:21 He reminds us that 3 is important, for on the third day He will be resurrected.

Numbers should not scare us as long as numbers alone are not the only focus. If we chase numbers we will never experience the joy of ministry. If we realize that

numbers can be symbols of that which is important—namely God's people—they become our friends. The focus must always be on people, and I believe that the articles mentioned have that focus.

I was about 13 years old when I received for the first time a series of Bible studies from a Bible instructor. At that time more churches had individuals—often women—who had this humble-sounding but vital role. Week after week, Gertrude Battle—an older lady who seemed very old to a 13-year-old—studied the Word of God with me. Shortly before those studies we had immigrated to the United States from Germany, and I had a limited understanding of English. At times I found it difficult to understand her, but I could tell that she was truly interested in me. She wanted to know about my school, my family, and how I liked my new country. Even though I was not baptized at that time, she did not act as if she had wasted her time with me. She continued to show interest in my well-being. Was I a number to her? Did she indicate on some report how many Bible studies she had given me? Most likely she did, but she treated me as someone important. That's what matters.

How many did you baptize last year? A large number, you say. That's wonderful—as long as they know that you have a personal interest in their lives. How many hours did you spend reading the Word of God? One hundred and fifty, you say. What has the Word done for you? How many new pastors did you start in ministry during the last two years? Five, you say. Are they now as important to you as when you were recruiting them?

Numbers are a part of our lives but should not govern them. They should be symbols—symbols of how important we are to God and how important others are to us. ■

# "Tell the World"

## God's compelling vision for today's church

Mark A. Finley



Mark A. Finley is a vice president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, MD, United States.

Certainly not routine. Maybe historic. Whatever you call the opening session of the Annual Council<sup>1</sup> of the world Seventh-day Adventist Church, President Jan Paulsen enthusiastically introduced the "Tell the World" initiative that includes reaching every person on the planet with the gospel by 2010.

Neither a slogan nor empty rhetoric, the initiative calls for a prophetic cry for a prophetic church. As Dr. Paulsen clearly put it: "When it comes to the mission of the church, nothing should be routine. In all of our thinking and planning, at every level, we must constantly ask ourselves: What must we do, and how must we act to bring Christ to people who do not know Him? How can we effectively and creatively communicate hope to those who have none? This continues as our mission. May each one of us—church members and church leaders—commit ourselves anew to the task entrusted to us; to tell the world of the good news of Jesus and His soon return."

Without an emphasis on reaching people, the church fails in the reason for its existence as described clearly in the mission statement: "The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to communicate to all peoples the everlasting gospel of God's love in the context of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12, and as revealed in the life, death, resurrection and high priestly ministry of Jesus Christ, leading them to accept Jesus as personal Savior and Lord and to unite

with His remnant church and to nurture them in preparation for His soon return."<sup>2</sup>

Over the next five years, the Seventh-day Adventist Church will embark on a strategic plan directly focused on its God-given mission. "Tell the World" envisions just how the gospel of Jesus will be shared by the church from 2005–2010. It emphasizes the church's identity as a called-out community and its end-time mission of proclaiming the gospel to "every nation, tribe, tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6).<sup>3</sup>

### What is "Tell the World"?

More than a program, "Tell the World" incorporates what the church, by God's grace, will be and will do in fulfilling the command of Jesus to preach the gospel to every creature. As an individual and corporate commitment, "Tell the World" challenges each member to live out the key values of quality of life, unity, and growth in God's family.

"Tell the World" inspires the church to know Jesus personally, to share Him enthusiastically, and to proclaim His name intentionally with one voice. Can we ever begin to imagine what God might do if every church administrator, pastor, and church member lived out the principles of the gospel in their personal lives and lovingly witnessed the truths of Scripture to the people in their world? Imagine a global community living out the life of Christ in selfless service, a praying people empowered by the Spirit, nurtured on God's Word, and united in mission to fulfill their destiny as God's ambassadors to a waiting world.

### Seven key areas

The Church has identified seven key areas to focus its resources, energies, and prayers during the next five years that will unite the entire church in a comprehensive vision of sharing the good news. Every level of church leadership, every institution, every service, every initiative, and every church member will be involved. These seven target areas include spiritual growth, community involvement, personal witness, city outreach, church planting, evangelistic programming, and media ministry. Let's probe these areas a little and ask these questions: How do they relate to the local church? How can the broad vision of "Tell the World" become the specific call to Tell Your World? How can the corporate vision of the world church become the driving force behind the local church?

### Challenges to spiritual life

Recent surveys indicate that Seventh-day Adventists have confidence in the Christ Who

redeemed them. They have accepted the assurance of salvation through Christ alone. But other data relating to spiritual life raise serious concerns. Most church members do not spend time in daily devotions. Fewer than 50 percent of Adventists spend time with God in prayer and Bible study each day. And even fewer regularly read Ellen G. White writings.

If through the “precious promises” of the Word, “we [partake] of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4), how can church members grow in Christ without Bible study? If as Peter declares we are “born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever” (1 Pet. 1:23), how is it possible to be a genuine Christian without a personal devotional life? Ellen White put it well when she said, “If God’s Word were studied as it should be, men would have a breadth of mind, a nobility of character and a stability of purpose that is rarely seen in our times.”<sup>4</sup> All genuine revivals have their roots in prayer and God’s Word. With no devotional life, there is no spiritual growth. Could it be that one of the main reasons the church seems so powerless to tell the world is because of its spiritual poverty? For, “a revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all of our needs. To seek this should be our first work.”<sup>5</sup>

I know of a church in Asia where 40–60 women meet each morning at 4:30 to seek the Spirit’s blessing upon their lives, families, community, and church. In response God has done some marvelous things in their congregation. On a recent visit, I witnessed 350 people come forward in response to a powerful altar call by the pastor. When the Spirit moves, God does something special.

Every pastor must ask penetrating questions. “What can I do to lead my church in a deeper spiritual life? Where shall I begin? At a monthly prayer breakfast with my elders? In a Wednesday night prayer meeting series on the deeper devotional life? Perhaps in a Sabbath morning service on ‘Knowing Jesus’ with calls to deeper spirituality.” Whenever or however this becomes reality, one thing is for certain—if the deeper spiritual life does not exist as a priority for the pastor, it will not be a priority for the

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congregation. It takes little effort to pastor a spiritually complacent, going-nowhere church. It takes energy, creativity, and vision to pastor a spiritually dynamic, alive, ministering congregation.

The problem of apostasy has also affected Adventist churches with the average attendance in Sabbath School and church in some parts of the world field hovering around 50 percent. Can any church be spiritually healthy when approximately half of its members never attend church? In the last five years, there have been 5,049,157 accessions to the church through baptism or profession of faith. During the same period, 1,397,608 people have been dropped from church membership. The loss-gain ratio is 27.68 percent. “Tell the World” envisions a spiritually alive, caring, sensitive church concerned about members who leave as well as those who stay.

In the parable of the lost sheep, the Good Shepherd recognized one sheep lost out of 100, and he cared enough to go after it. The only way he knew one was lost was by counting his sheep. Are you counting your sheep? Do you know who is present on Sabbath morning and who isn’t? Do you have a plan in place to sensitively reach out to those who are missing each Sabbath? Data from church growth surveys on apostasy indicate if a missing member does not hear from someone within a six-week time frame, they typically re-invest their time in some

other activities such as work, sports, family activities, or social clubs. Now they have become extremely difficult to reach.

“Tell the World” is not simply a vision of what happens on another continent or another culture at another place—it happens in your church. It asks the question: How can your church increase the percentage of church members spending time in personal Bible study and prayer from the current rate of 50 percent to 65 percent? How can we increase our church attendance to a majority of the membership? How can we intentionally develop a strategy to reduce apostasy and actively engage new members in service?

## The challenge of growth

Growing churches equip and train their members for service. They reach out to the community to meet the felt needs. These dynamic growing congregations are sensitive to community needs while at the same time they are intentionally evangelistic. Only one in three Adventist church members is sharing their faith or is involved in community service. One of the strategic goals of “Tell the World” centers on increasing the percentage of members involved in the community from 29 percent to at least 40 percent. If your church closed its doors tomorrow, would the community miss it? If it shuts down, would the community demand it reopen?

A fascinating church-growth principle called the “narrow-few” principle, simply

means: The narrower your program base, the fewer people you will win for Christ. If you contact a few, you will win a few. It is that simple. Why not write down all of the ways your church interfaces with the community this year? How many guests and visitors will you touch? If the number totals less than three times the membership of your church, you probably will have little impact on the community. Are you planning Bible study classes, musical concerts, health and family life seminars specifically designed to bring your church members in contact with the community? If so, your church will grow.

"Tell the World" challenges five million Adventists to reach at least one person for Jesus and bring them into fellowship with God's family in the next five years. If five million Adventists win five million of their friends and neighbors to Christ in the next five years, we will baptize as many people from this initiative as we have in all others combined in the last five years. "Win One" is a "Tell the World" initiative where each local region of the world field will develop action plans and programs to equip five million lay people in witnessing activities.

The apostle Paul discusses the role of the pastor as the one who "[equips] . . . the saints [believers] for the work of ministry" (Eph. 4:12). Ellen White adds, "Every church should be a training school for Christian workers."<sup>6</sup>

"Tell the World" envisions pastors equipping and involving church members in service. Growing churches, evangelistic churches, intentionally equip their members to reach others for Christ. Is your church a "training school" for Christian workers? Do you have specific plans to involve the entire membership in reaching the community? What classes will you teach this year to equip your members with effective witnessing skills? Your church exists as the body of Christ. With members equipped to serve, they will meet needs everywhere in Jesus' name, and your church will explode in growth. Peru with over 680,000 members and a ratio of 1 Adventist for every 40 of the country's population baptized more than 57,000 in 2004. The 2005 figures will be in the range of 70,000. Ruy Nagel, president of the South American

Division, shared the secrets of South America's rapid growth rate this way: "Integrated evangelism—the involvement of the whole church and small groups—is the reference of success for the South American Division." Church leaders passionately committed to mission also passionately commit to equipping lay people to participate in mission.

### **The challenge of the cities**

While in many areas the church experiences rapid growth, a huge challenge still remains. The world has a population of more than six billion. Every second, four babies are born. China with 1.3 billion people, and India with over 1 billion, pose enormous challenges for the church. The burgeoning population centers of those vast countries remain virtually untouched with the gospel. The greatest population growth in the world resides in big cities that soon will be home to more than half of the world's population. But in this increasingly urban world, most Adventist congregations locate outside the big cities. World divisions of the Adventist Church have targeted 66 major cities in a master strategy to make an impact on their massive populations. More than 400 cities in the world have a population of 1 million or more. Of these, 58 are mega cities of more than 5 million population, with the urban

agglomerations of Tokyo, Mexico City, Seoul, New York, and Sao Paulo topping 20 million each. The challenge of the cities can be described as massive, but the challenge is more than numerical. Numerous ethnic groups live in the cities, and these groups represent the population of the world.

In 1882 Ellen White raised the issue of the cities with the Adventist Church leadership. She observed, "I have been shown that in our labor for the enlightenment of the people in the large cities, the work has not been as well organized or the methods of labor as efficient as in other churches that have not the great light we regard as so essential."<sup>7</sup>

In 1902 she continued her plea: "New methods must be introduced."<sup>8</sup> This leads administration and pastors alike to ask at least three soul-searching questions:

1. What strategic changes in planning and prioritizing does God call churches, conferences, unions, and divisions to make to reach the cities?
2. What new "out of the box" methods might we try to reach today's urban, secular cities?
3. If the cities are mission fields, how might we reallocate finances and personnel to reach them?

God has the answers. As we prayerfully seek Him, He will reveal how to reach the great urban population centers.

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## A church planting movement

"Tell the World" also centers around a church-planting movement. From 2000–2005 the Adventist Church planted 17,000 new congregations. During the next five years, church leaders have committed to plant 20,000 new congregations. The early church exploded in growth because it constantly focused on planting new churches. Acts 9:31 reports that "the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, . . . were multiplied." Acts 16:5 adds, "So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily." New congregations generally pulsate with spiritual life. New members bring a freshness to the body of Christ. Might God be leading your congregation to plant a new church in a neighboring community? Maybe you have a group of Spanish, Romanian, Ghanaian Adventists, or some other group, within your congregation who has a burden to reach out to others in their community who do not know the three angels' messages. How might you support them? How might you encourage them in their mission? Have you thought of the idea of targeting a neighboring community with no Adventist presence and sending five "mission families" to raise up a new church plant? Churches planting churches grow spiritually stronger themselves.

## Public evangelism

Public evangelism continues as a significant factor in the growth of the church in most parts of the world. It still pleases "God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe" (1 Cor. 1:21). Twenty-first century men and women still respond to Christ-centered, Bible-based, preaching that reveals God's last-day message of love for the world. "Tell the World" envisions the more than 60,000 Adventist churches in the world sponsoring at least one evangelistic series each year. If every church conducted an evangelistic meeting each year, we would conduct 300,000 evangelistic meetings in the next five years. What an evangelistic explosion! Why not get out your calendar, meet with your church board, pray, prepare, and plan your evangelistic series. Choose

the style that works best for you. Some series focus on the prophecies for five or six weeks. Other pastors prefer a shorter series on the life of Christ. The issue is not the topics or length of series. Whenever Christ is exalted, the word is preached and appeals are made, the Spirit moves, and people are converted.

## Media ministry

"Tell the World" envisions an international linkage of media ministries covering the globe with the three angels' messages. The leadership of the Adventist church has committed seriously and creatively to use technology and all communication channels—radio, television, the Internet, and publications to reach every person in the world with the gospel message. "Tell the World" envisions a church of praying members, filled with the Spirit, nurtured on God's Word; a dynamic, vital, caring church meeting its own spiritual needs and lovingly reaching out to the lost. It envisions a church where all departments, entities, leaders, and members are unified in a single-minded redemptive mission.

All of our Lord's biddings are enablings. All He calls us to accomplish, His Spirit empowers us to accomplish. He promises, " 'And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come' " (Matt. 24:14). Your city has become your world. The work of God will not be finished anywhere until finished in your town. Why not commit yourself anew to telling the old, old story to your world? ■

- 1 Annual Council meets every year in the fall with the full membership of the world church (General Conference) Executive Committee, including some 300 church and lay members from around the world, to discuss plans and review what has been already accomplished.
- 2 *Working Policy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists*, 2004-2005 ed., A 05 05.
- 3 All Scripture passages are from New King James Version.
- 4 Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1956), 90.
- 5 -----, *Review and Herald*, March 22, 1887.
- 6 -----, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1942), 149.
- 7 -----, *Medical Ministry* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1963), 301.
- 8 -----, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1970), 70.

# What do Adventists believe?

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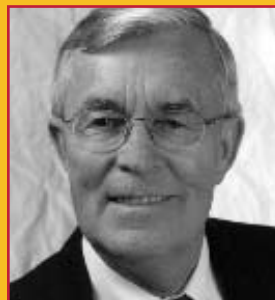
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**Marguerite Shuster** turns to the Word in each of her roles: as a woman, a pastor, and as a teacher. A professor of preaching at Fuller Theological Seminary who has been on the faculty there since 1992, Shuster holds a Ph.D. in psychology. She is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who has served as an associate pastor for six years and a solo pastor for five years. Her books and articles about the dynamics of good and evil, as well as on Paul Jewett's Christology, have pointed readers back to the Word.



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# God's mighty acts in a changing world

## Part 1 of 2

Jon Paulien



Jon Paulien, Ph.D., is chair of the New Testament Department, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.

**T**he Seventh-day Adventist Church faces serious problems in evangelism and church growth. One such problem became clear during a recent pastors' meeting in South England, where we reviewed the status of the church in Britain. In spite of a major increase in immigration over the last twenty years, 95 percent of the British population remains English-speaking whites. Of the 20,000 Adventists in that country, about 10 percent reflect this majority; 85 percent come from West Indian immigrants, who constitute only 2 percent of the general population; and the rest from other ethnic groups. Of the 8,000 Adventist members in London, only about 100 are whites. Most members felt that these statistics indicate a racial problem: blacks are naturally open to the gospel and whites are naturally closed.

My experience in New York City and extensive research on Western Christianity suggest a different explanation. In North America the divide of spiritual interest is not between whites and blacks but between indigenous and immigrant. Recent immigrants from Eastern Europe have been wide open to the Adventist message, as my German forebears had once been. But second and third generation German-Americans are not being reached. Large numbers of blacks from places like Haiti, Jamaica, and Trinidad are baptized every year in New York City, yet that seems not to be the case with African-Americans.

Likewise, church growth among immigrant Hispanics continues, yet we rarely baptize large

numbers from third or fourth generation Hispanics. And in the Asian community, massive defections are common among second and third generation Korean-Americans. This leads me to the conclusion that the real evangelistic challenge faced by the Adventist Church in the Western world is not how to reach whites, but how to reach the mainstream cultures of North America, Europe, Australia, and other developed countries. When it comes to evangelism, we do not face a racial problem but an indigenous problem.

When I shared these thoughts with the largely West Indian audience of Adventist pastors in South England, one pastor remarked: "Why are we wasting time talking about hard-to-reach people? We don't have time for this. Let's invest our time and money on people groups that are open. If the majority culture isn't open to the gospel, it's not our problem."

I responded, "Do you care if your children and grandchildren stay in the church? My experience as a second-generation German-American tells me that your children and grandchildren will be indigenous Brits; they won't be West Indians anymore. If the church doesn't learn how to reach indigenous British, it won't interest your children and grandchildren either."

A white pastor spoke up: "There's something here I don't understand. When the Adventist Church first came to Britain (toward the end of the nineteenth century), we reached the British mainstream. If that wasn't so, we wouldn't have any Anglos in the church at all right now. What has changed between then and now?"

The question suddenly connected a whole lot of things in my mind. My recent study and research on the philosophic changes that have affected Western thought, giving way to what is now known as postmodernism, suddenly made sense concerning the lack of response to gospel outreach on the part of the indigenous populations of the Western world. What I am about to share is relevant to the situation in North America and in other western countries where the concept of truth and reality has undergone tremendous changes. These changes need not frighten us, but with patience and understanding we can see God at work through such changes for new ways of witness and outreach.

This article will provide a brief historical survey of the religious thought and discuss the main contours of postmodernism, and how we can shape our response to postmodern challenges, keeping in view that God is in ultimate control.

## A short history of religious thought

At the risk of superficiality, we begin with a short history of religious thought. The following question will guide that history: How do people determine truth? How do they decide what is true and what is not?

**The premodern period.** In the Middle Ages (the premodern period), truth was thought to reside in privileged groups. The average person didn't think he or she had a clue. Truth could be found only in the clergy or in the Church. If you wanted to know the truth, you needed to talk to a priest. Whenever the priests would disagree, truth would be decided by the head of the Church or an action of one of the great councils.

**Christian modernism.** During the Reformation, people's confidence in privileged people and groups began to break down. Truth was seen to reside no longer in the Church or the state but in logical statements based on careful biblical research. Priests, popes, and nobles had no greater access to truth than anyone else. Anyone with diligence and talent could understand the truth through careful study of the Scriptures.

The worldview of Christian modernism dominated nineteenth-century America. It was the milieu in which Adventism got its start and found its logical appeal to the American mainstream. It was the milieu in which early Adventist missionaries found a ready audience in Great Britain as well. And anywhere in the world where Christian modernism still dominates, Adventism still reaches the mainstream with power. But those areas are shrinking rapidly. The spearhead of philosophical change has already moved two generations past nineteenth-century America. The changes have been wrenching and massive.

**Secular modernism.** With the Enlightenment the world experienced a shift from Christian modernism to secular modernism. While intellectual circles were already making this move in the eighteenth century, secular modernism became the dominant worldview in North America sometime in the early decades of the twentieth century. The Fundamentalist-Liberal controversy of the 1920s could be seen as a rite of passage,

in which conservative Christianity lost touch with the mainstream.

Beginning with Descartes (1596–1650), the father of modern philosophy, secular modernists came to believe that the key to truth was not careful Bible study but methodological doubt. The goal was to eliminate superstition of all kinds by exposing the flaws in all previous thinking. This would be done by applying careful, scientific methods to all questions, including religious questions. So secular modernists believe that truth cannot be found in the church or the Bible, it is found in a scientific process of careful observation and experimentation.

The goal of secular modernism was a “bomb-proof” minimum of truth in which one could have absolute confidence. With continued application of scientific method, these “assured results” could be gradually increased until life could be lived with a fair amount of confidence that we knew what was really going on. Science would provide the “truth,” and technology would provide the power to change the world. Education would spread this new “gospel,” and the result would eventually be a paradise of affluence and security.

But reality got in the way of this dream. A hundred years ago the concept of relativity and the uncertainty principle of quantum mechanics began to paint a very different picture of the universe. The twentieth century also shattered the dream of a technological paradise. Scientific progress seemed to go hand in hand with an increase in pollution and crime. World War I, World War II, the Holocaust and other genocides, weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism combined to wring the confidence out of scientific modernists. A new generation proclaims the god of secular modernism to be a *false god*. Humanity today turns away from the truth of science to look for truth in other directions.

**Secular postmodernism.** In the United States, beginning with Generation X (born 1964–1980), an increasingly pervasive worldview distrusts the scientific approach to truth. In postmodernism, truth is not primarily found in science, the Bible, or the church. It is found in relationships and the telling of stories. Truth has become rather elusive. Instead of Truth

(with a capital “T”), the postmodern prefers to think of “many truths,” a “variety of truths,” or “truth for me.” Feeling that no one has a clear grasp on truth but that everyone has a part of the picture results in small bits of expertise floating around in a vast array of ignorance.

The building of community, therefore, is a key component of the postmodern search for truth. As we each share that part of truth that we are “expert” on, everyone benefits. In the postmodern environment, building community becomes more important than the ideas that once held communities together.

At first blush the basic “truth” of postmodernism seems a self-evident truth. Only an egotist would claim to have a handle on all truth. Human beings have long recognized that “in the multitude of counselors there is safety,” and that we all have a lot to learn. But something more than this is going on here.

Generally accepting and inclusive, postmodernism is quite exclusive in three areas:

1. It rejects metanarrative, the big stories that try to explain everything, like the great controversy—feeling that metanarratives try to explain too much and therefore promote an exclusivism that leads to violence. It is, after all, faith in a metanarrative that fuels the terrifying actions of an al Qaeda or the medieval papacy.

2. Postmodernism rejects truth as an institution (church), particularly when that institution thinks of itself as unique or better than others (the *true church*?). Thus the Adventist idea of a “remnant church” is problematic in a postmodern environment.

3. Postmodernism also tends to reject truth as Bible considering the Bible to be filled with violence, everlasting burning hell, and the subjection of women and minorities. While most of these charges are somewhat misplaced, they can be a significant barrier to casual exploration of the Scriptures.

## The hand of God in postmodernism

As we contemplate these trends, we find it easy to question whether the hand of God could possibly be seen in postmodernism. Is postmodernism an



act of the devil, or something that God could use? Is it, perhaps, even a necessary steppingstone to where God wants the human race to go? As a Seventh-day Adventist nurtured in the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, I cannot fathom an environment that leaves God “without witness” (Acts 14:17). Convinced that God’s hand is behind these changes and that we are heading to the place of His choosing, I have found eight reasons to believe that postmodernism is an act of God in the positive sense.

**1. A sense of brokenness.** Postmoderns definitely don’t share the self-confidence of secular moderns. They are much more likely than their grandparents to think of themselves as broken people. They often come from broken families. When they share home stories with their friends, they discover that things aren’t any better with them. Postmoderns, as a result, have a keen sense of brokenness, a deep need for inner healing. While brokenness can lead to despair, it also can open the way to the refreshing winds of the gospel.

**2. Humility and authenticity.** Living in an age where image is king, postmodern individuals place a high premium on humility, honesty, and authenticity in interpersonal relationships. It is considered better to be honest about one’s weaknesses and handicaps than to craft an image. This principle is closely related to the previous one. Postmoderns are willing to share that sense honestly with friends they consider safe.

Humility and authenticity are, of course, at the root of Christian faith. Confession is nothing else than telling the truth about oneself. In modernism, humility was thought demeaning to human value; people were humble only if they had plenty to be humble about! Postmodernism, on the other hand, sees genuineness as a higher value. God is bringing the culture to the place where it values one of the great testing truths of the Christian tradition (John 3:19, 20).

**3. The search for identity and purpose.** Postmoderns long for a clear sense of personal identity, yet question whether they could ever attain it for themselves. In their experience, the identity claims of others often prove to be flawed or self-constructed. With few or no role models,

postmoderns tend toward identity crisis. They may try on several “identities” yet end up with no clue which identity is really theirs.

This is an opening for the kind of positive identity that can come from knowing that one has been bought with a price. A well-rounded Christian faith helps people know why they are here, where they have come from, and where they are going. Postmoderns need their lives to have a sense of mission and purpose, a sense that their lives make a difference in the world. Scripture encourages the idea that each person is the object of God’s purpose (Jer. 1:5).

**4. Need for community.** Postmoderns have a strong need for community. I have been amazed to watch this younger generation handle relationships. Unlike my generation, they seem much less likely to pair off. They tend to go out in groups of five (say two girls and three guys) or seven (say five girls and two guys), always with their friends, yet somewhat afraid to go deep.

Community (*koinonia*) remains foundational to New Testament faith. If Christian communities can learn to experience and express the kind of community the New Testament proclaims, they would find postmoderns quite interested in what they have to offer. Once again, the hand of God seems to be moving the mainstream a bit closer to the biblical ideal.

**5. Inclusiveness.** There exists a refreshing inclusiveness in the postmodern attitude toward others. When I was doing my doctorate, the intellectual atmosphere of scholarly societies seemed much more controlled than it is now. One could only read papers and make meaningful comments in relation to the fairly rigid agenda of modernistic historical criticism. Since that time scholarship has been much more open to a variety of perspectives, including Adventist ones. The inclusiveness of postmodernism has opened the way for Adventist exegetes and theologians to share the kinds of insights that have benefited us for a century and a half.

**6. Spirituality.** The younger generation tends to be more spiritual than its predecessor. Even among actors, athletes, and scholars, people are becoming more open about their own personal faith and

practice. While there is a strong suspicion toward traditional institutions and the Bible, postmoderns are open to spiritual discussions with anyone who knows God and can teach others how to know God.

**7. Toleration of opposites.** One of the fascinating characteristics of postmodernism centers on its ability to tolerate opposites. Philosophically, the Greeks saw the opposite of a truth to be false. Scientific modernism was grounded in Greek Western logic. But Hebrew logic could often see contrasting ideas not in terms of true and false but in terms of a tension between two poles. So the postmodern ability to tolerate opposites is closer to the biblical worldview than the sharp distinctions of scientific modernism. This means that postmoderns may have an easier time understanding the Bible than did previous generations.

**8. Truth as story.** For postmoderns truth is found not in church, Bible (as traditionally understood), or science but in community and in story. The concept of truth as story provides a powerful corrective to traditional use of the Bible. Many are frustrated that the Bible was not written as a systematic theology. You would think God would have been a little more logical about this truth business. But since I cannot outline exactly what God thought when He caused the Bible to be put together the way it was, I can only assume that the result is exactly what He wanted. If God chose the Bible to be a collection of stories, then postmodernism might be our best chance to fully explore the implications of those stories for the character and purposes of God.

## Conclusion

I realize that some sociologists question whether such a thing as a postmodern worldview exists. Perhaps it is better to speak of a “postmodern condition.” There are definitely changes afoot, even though we do not know where those changes are taking us. But one thing is clear to me: God’s hand is not weaker than before. His mighty acts are present in even the most challenging of circumstances.

In a succeeding article (April 2006), we will explore the impact of the postmodern condition on the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. ■

# Contemporary design theory: The intelligent design movement

## Part 2

James Gibson

*In the December 2005 issue we reviewed the development of the intelligent design theory of origins. We also noted how the arguments of Hume and Darwin and their followers were thought to have brought about the demise of the design theory. But in recent times some scholars have argued that certain phenomena in nature are best explained in terms of intelligent design theory. In this concluding article, we will review the contemporary status of the design theory and examine some of the major criticisms leveled against it.*



James Gibson, Ph.D., is the director of the Geoscience Research Institute, Loma Linda, California, United States.

In 1913, Lawrence Henderson published a book<sup>1</sup> in which he described the physical features that facilitate the existence of living organisms. He concluded that the environment and living organisms were mutually fit for each other, and that both must be products of similar kinds of processes. Noting that teleology would be a tempting explanation for the fitness of the environment, he opted instead for an explanation using only natural laws. He looked for a process parallel with natural selection and appealed to cosmic evolution as the process by which the environment became so friendly to the possibility of life. Henderson's book has been largely forgotten, but the issues he raised have recently come into focus again.

A more recent book with similar arguments is by Michael Denton.<sup>2</sup> However, Denton is more open to the possibility that the laws of nature themselves may be the result of intelligent design. James Lovelock<sup>3</sup> advocates the idea that the earth

is a kind of living organism, with homeostatic feedback systems that favor the existence of conditions suitable for life. He does not favor intelligent design but seems sympathetic to the possibility of some type of vitalistic force that produces favorable results. Another book addressing the design of the physical universe was by Barrow and Tipler.<sup>4</sup> These authors all have in common a recognition that the physical universe is fit for life with no apparent necessity that it be so. They also share a reluctance to attribute the remarkable design of the universe to a Creator/God, preferring instead to propose some kind of vague cosmic force or, at best, a deist conception of God.

Although the books mentioned above provide an intellectual basis for inferring design, it was an entirely different kind of book that gave rise to the intelligent design movement. That honor goes to *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*.<sup>5</sup> In this book, Michael Denton points out that the general theory of biological evolution was not well-supported by the data. After reviewing the evidence from comparative anatomy, paleontology, and molecular biology, Denton concludes: "Neither of the two fundamental axioms of Darwin's macroevolutionary theory—the concept of the continuity of nature, that is, the idea of a functional continuum of all life forms linking all species together and ultimately leading back to a primeval cell, and the belief that all the adaptive design of life has resulted from a blind random process—have been validated by one single empirical discovery of scientific advance since 1859."<sup>6</sup>

Denton has softened some of his statements since the book was published, but the overall impact of his critique remains. Chance is simply not a plausible mechanism for the origins of the kind of complexity we observe in living organisms, nor is there adequate empirical evidence to conclude for a single tree of life.

Among those who read Denton's book was Phillip Johnson, a professor of law at the University of California, Berkeley campus. Johnson had supposed that evolution was on a firm empirical basis and had never been motivated to challenge it. Denton's book changed that perspective. Johnson began to study evolutionary writings, paying particular attention to the structure of the arguments presented and the evidence used to support them. He was surprised by the results and concluded that the central evolutionist claims were based on philosophical presuppositions rather than logically derived from empirical evidence. As a result, Johnson decided to challenge the evolutionary establishment. Thus was born the intelligent design movement.

Johnson opened his attack on Darwinism with his book *Darwin on Trial*. Johnson pointed out that the data from nature support evolution only if they are interpreted on the assumption that evolution is true (and design is false). If separated from the assumptions of naturalism, the data may actually be problematic for the evolutionary hypothesis, and design might be the best explanation. Thus, Johnson concluded, it is actually philosophical naturalism, rather than empirical data, that is driving scientists to affirm evolution. If intelligent design is ruled out *a priori*, the only remaining alternative is some kind of naturalistic process, such as evolution.

The influence of philosophical naturalism on science is a focus of the intelligent design movement. Johnson eschewed any specific process for design—focusing only on the question of design itself, by whatever process might have been used.

Johnson's book attracted a great deal of attention, both positive and negative. Unsurprisingly, evolutionary scientists opposed his arguments vehemently. Biblical creationists were intrigued that the flaws in evolutionary thinking were so skillfully being revealed, but they were not satisfied to leave the details or age of creation ambiguous. Ancient creationists welcomed Johnson's arguments, because they were consistent with the possibility of direct divine actions in nature without insisting on a young earth. The most surprising reaction came from those who believe that evolution through natural selection is God's chosen method for creating. This group vigorously protested against the idea that God is active in nature. According to this view, God may or may not have designed the laws of nature, but nature is the product of natural law, not of any specific activity on God's part. Johnson's argument for intelligent design implies an active God. Thus reaction to Johnson's argument tends to be based on whether or not one believes in an active God.

Johnson's stature as a tenured professor at a prestigious university attracted a group of young graduate students who agreed with his argument, despite holding differing views on the age and process of creation. Among these were William

Dembski, Stephen Meyer, Paul Nelson, and Jonathan Wells. Each of these has published supporting arguments for intelligent design. Wells has written<sup>7</sup> a strong critique of evolutionary arguments that use misleading evidence to support their conclusions, and Nelson<sup>8</sup> and Meyer<sup>9</sup> have both contributed to books discussing various aspects of design.

William Dembski has been especially successful in developing the theory of intelligent design by proposing a method of identifying design through what he calls "specified complexity."<sup>10</sup> Dembski proposes an "explanatory filter" to identify three types of causes: natural law, chance, and design. Events that are not the result of natural law must be due either to chance or to design. Chance is ruled out only if the probability is extremely low, and the phenomenon to be explained is complex, and if the phenomenon matches some independently derived pattern. Dembski's proposals have been criticized on grounds that certain computer programs develop complexity by selection, allegedly falsifying specified complexity as an indicator of design.<sup>11</sup> Dembski's explanatory filter has been criticized for separating the different causes when in fact they may not be mutually exclusive.<sup>12</sup> Natural evil is also said to be a problem for design.

A group of other scholars has joined the intelligent design movement. Michael Behe, a biochemist from LeHigh University, has probably had the greatest impact. Behe introduced<sup>13</sup> the concept of irreducible complexity as a criterion to identify design. An irreducibly complex system is any system that requires numerous, well-integrated parts to function, whereas removal of any single part destroys function. Such systems cannot be constructed by natural selection one piece at a time, because selection cannot favor a nonfunctional system. Thus, if such systems exist, they must have been formed by intelligent design. The flagellum is a favored example. Several criticisms have been leveled at Behe's argument, including the claim that it is premature to identify the flagellum as irreducibly complex, and that an irreducibly complex system might be built stepwise by providing different kinds of functions at each step.<sup>14</sup>

Several other scholars sympathetic to intelligent design have written books and articles.<sup>15</sup>

## Criticisms of intelligent design

I will briefly describe and evaluate some of the major criticisms leveled against intelligent design.

### ***Criticism 1: Intelligent design inhibits scientific inquiry.*<sup>16</sup>**

Description. Attributing a phenomenon to design is to remove motivation for further study, and/or to make it impossible to reach any conclusion because we cannot know the intentions of the designer.<sup>17</sup>

Evaluation. This is a false concern. Historically, science was developed by people who believed in design, and who even attributed phenomena to design, but who, nevertheless, attempted to explore how God might have brought about the observed phenomenon, and what regularities might be inferred from their study. Indeed, it has been argued that the idea of design provided the necessary context in which modern science developed. Those who are inclined to explore the world will do so whether or not they believe in design.

### ***Criticism 2: Intelligent design is a sterile idea.*<sup>18</sup>**

Description. Intelligent design does not provide any questions to explore scientifically, hence it is useless for science, whether true or not.

Evaluation. Intelligent design may not be a hypothesis to test, but it may provide a "metaphysical research programme"<sup>19</sup> in which hypotheses may be generated and tested. For example, consider historical biology. Under the current paradigm, three major types of questions are being asked:

a. What is the pattern of relationships of living organisms? Assuming it is a single tree or bush, how are the various species connected within that single structure?

b. What processes have led to diversification of life within the tree/bush?

c. What is the history of life in time and space?

Intelligent design would pose the same categories of questions, but without the same assumptions about the answers. For example, design might ask the following:

(continued on page 16)





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a. What is the pattern of relationships of living organisms? Assuming there are numerous trees or bushes, what are the boundaries of the various natural lineages?<sup>20</sup>

b. What processes have led to diversification within each lineage, and what might be the limits of such processes?

c. What is the history of life in time and space? What similarities and differences might we find in comparing patterns in time and space among various independent lineages?

**Criticism 3: Intelligent design is an appeal from ignorance.<sup>21</sup>**

Description. Design is invoked when we don't understand something, of the same kind as the "god-of-the-gaps" argument of former ages. As science advances, our understanding will increase, and the number of mysteries will decrease. Thus, what appears as design today will eventually be shown to be the result of chance and natural law.

Evaluation. This problem has occurred historically, but contemporary intelligent design arguments are meant to avoid this problem. The criterion of irreducible complexity requires an understanding of function and mechanism rather than ignorance. Dembski's explanatory filter requires that law and chance be given first consideration as potential explanations, and design is inferred only when other explanations can be reasonably ruled out. This is a valid concern, but advocates of intelligent design have developed their arguments explicitly to avoid this problem.

**Criticism 4: Design is religiously motivated and inappropriate in science.<sup>22</sup>**

Evaluation. This is basically an *ad hominem* argument. The value of intelligent design should be examined on its own merits, not on the private views of its advocates. Mere religious motivation, by itself, is irrelevant to whether design should be considered as an explanation of nature. Honesty is a religious value, but scientists have found it very helpful in the practice of science. Although there is always the danger that ideology will negatively affect free inquiry, this danger is the fault not of religion but of politics. Critics of the general theory of evolution may find that ideology is currently affecting

free inquiry, making this argument sound politically motivated. In addition, it can be argued that evolution itself is religiously motivated.

**Criticism 5: Any designer would also have to be responsible for evil.<sup>23</sup>**

Description. If the world is the result of intelligent design, the existence of so much suffering and violence implies that the designer is evil. Since Christians claim their God is good and not evil, He cannot be the designer.

Evaluation. The character of the designer is irrelevant to the question of whether design exists. The great controversy metanarrative provides an explanation for why God does not prevent evil.

**Criticism 6: Design is superfluous because natural selection is adequate.<sup>24</sup>**

Description. Natural selection is an adequate mechanism to explain the apparent design of living organisms. This has been demonstrated by computer analogies such as the Tierra program, in which computer images are subjected to a series of modifications and selection, resulting in unexpected complexity and creativity. Design is an unnecessary and unstable hypothesis.

Evaluation. Natural selection has never been shown to have the power claimed by its advocates.<sup>25</sup> Selection clearly has the power to favor different variants in different environments, and to "pull" the process of speciation. However, it is a leap of presumption to claim that this provides support for the contention that all biodiversity originated from a common ancestor. Nor will it help to appeal to experimental evidence. The experimental evidence we have available suggests that natural selection lacks the power to produce morphological novelties. Living populations respond rapidly to selection at first, but variation soon runs into limits. Appealing to computer modeling is not satisfactory in the absence of any evidence that the modeling applies to real biological systems.

**Criticism 7: Accepting design would overturn all of science.<sup>26</sup>**

Description. All of science is based on naturalistic explanations. To accept design as an explanation would change the fundamental nature of scientific methodology. Furthermore, it would alter the

conclusions drawn in all areas of science and would create chaos, leaving only religious speculations to take the place of rigorous inquiry.

Evaluation. First, the mere fact that accepting design would force a change in scientific methodology and/or scientific conclusions is irrelevant to the question of whether design is true or not. Indeed, if design is true, and if its acceptance would radically alter the way science is done, then the sooner the change is accomplished the better for science.

On the other hand, it seems a great exaggeration to claim that all of science would be overturned by acceptance of design. The best of science is based on experiment, whereas design is a historical explanation. An explanation of intelligent design would have little or no effect on experimental procedures or inferences drawn from them. This is because, if design is true, the regularities in nature, which are the subjects of experiment, are due to God's continuous, consistent activity. Any irregularities due to God's special actions are not amenable to experiment, since they are singularities and do not form any patterns to be investigated. Thus, acceptance of design would have minimal effect on the kind of science that forms the basis for technology, but might affect the kinds of historical explanations and "just-so stories" that are offered in the historical sciences.

**A caveat and future prospects**


Two questions were posed at the beginning of this article in the December 2005 issue: Is design a necessary inference from nature? And would the explanatory power of design enhance our understanding of nature? I think the answer to both is a qualified "yes." Design is a necessary inference from nature if one is concerned with its origins, but most of science is unconcerned with origins. Intelligent design would improve our understanding of the history of life, but one can practice a great deal of experimental science without considering historical explanations like design.

A caveat is in order here. I believe that intelligent design is a useful explanation for the origin of many features in nature. However, it is inappropriate to attribute

every event in nature to the direct will of God. God does not normally intervene to prevent our behavior from having predictable consequences. Thus, when someone slips and falls, it is not valid to claim that God designed that person to fall. Freedom of choice requires that God not prevent our will from being actualized. This is the best explanation I know of for the problem of moral evil, and the problem of natural evil has a parallel kind of explanation. Scripture indicates that God delegated to Adam the responsibility for the world and its creatures, and Adam forfeited that responsibility to Satan. Thus, Satan is the “prince of this world,” and it is only reasonable to expect that evil will be the result. The book of Job reveals that Satan has an influence on nature. What we term “acts of God” may actually be, in some cases, “acts of Satan.” Intelligent design has a useful place, but it is not the only factor to consider.

What is the probable future of intelligent design? Of course, no one can say with certainty. However, I think it is clear that the present leaders of science will not accept it. They are too deeply committed to materialistic philosophy. This does not mean that intelligent design will not gain a stronger foothold in the scientific community. I suspect it will. Those who believe that God intentionally used the process of descent with modification to bring about the diversity of life may find it easy to suppose that He actively guides the process. The drawback from this is the potential for acceptance of occult, vital forces and the dark side of the supernatural this involves. On the other hand, intelligent design also has the potential to open minds to the possibility of biblical supernaturalism and to consider the promises of the gospel. Believers should work to make this happen. ■

- (Bethesda, Md.: Adler and Adler, 1995).
- 6 Denton, 1985, 345.
- 7 J. Wells, *Icons of Evolution: Science or Myth?* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Press, 2000).
- 8 Nelson contributed chapters to *Mere Creation* and, with John Mark Reynolds, to *Three Views on Creation and Evolution*, and has another book in preparation.
- 9 Meyer co-edited, with John Angus Campbell, *Darwinism, Design and Public Education* (Michigan State University Press, 2003), and has contributed chapters to *Mere Creation* and *The Creation Hypothesis*.
- 10 Dembski, *The Design Inference*, (1998) 36–47.
- 11 R. T. Pennock, *Tower of Babel: The Evidence Against the New Creationism* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 108.
- 12 Ibid., 95.
- 13 M. J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box* (New York and London: Free Press, 1996).
- 14 Pennock, 266–269.
- 15 These include: J. P. Moreland, *Christianity and the Nature of Science: A Philosophical Investigation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1989); J. P. Moreland, ed., *The Creation Hypothesis* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994); J. P. Moreland and R. M. Reynolds, eds., *Three Views on Creation and Evolution* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999); C. G. Hunter; Thomas Woodward, *Doubts About Darwin: A History of Intelligent Design* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003); Del Ratzsch, *Science and Its Limits: The Natural Sciences in Christian Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000); philosopher Alvin Plantinga, and others.
- 16 E.g., Ruse, 24, 25, discussing Bacon and Descartes; T. M. Berra, *Evolution and the Myth of Creationism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 66.
- 17 Pennock, 291, 292.
- 18 Berra, 142; Miller 28, 126.
- 19 Popper in D. Miller, *Popper Selections* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 242. Popper once applied the term to natural selection; he later modified his position to accept the notion of natural selection as testable.
- 20 Such research is already being conducted by the group Wort and Wissen in Germany, and the Baraminology Study Group at Bryan College in Tennessee.
- 21 Pennock, 249.
- 22 Pennock, 352–358; Ruse, 287.
- 23 Hume, 1779; Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species: By Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life* (New York: New American Library, 1859, 1958); Ruse, 28, 330–333; Pennock 1999; K. R. Miller, *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 127, 128.
- 24 Pennock, 106–109; Ruse, 319–328.
- 25 Recall Denton's criticism, endnote 20; see also J. Whitefield, 2004. “Born in a Watery Commune,” in *Nature* 427:674–676, last sentence.
- 26 Pennock, 340, 341; Miller, 1999, 81; Berra, 120, even goes so far as to worry that society would be ruined.



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## Reading the Word of God

For some, reading has almost become a lost art. However, to the follower of Jesus, Bible reading is an informative, encouraging, and spiritual exercise. Some find it difficult to maintain a consistent schedule of Bible reading. It seems like it is always easier to do something else. What can you do if you don't really enjoy reading the word?

1. Make a decision. Determine that, come what may, you are going to follow a Bible Reading Plan every day. Start with a short, but specific, amount of time (just five or ten minutes).
2. Use the power of your will.
3. Establish a set time and place to study.
4. Always pray before you open the Bible. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you. Remember, “spiritual things are spiritually discerned.”
5. Get acquainted with the Bible as a whole—compare what a prophet says with the teachings of Jesus and the letters of an apostle.
6. Keep reading the same passage until it becomes a part of your mind. Aim for comprehension more than quantity. Sometimes a paragraph must be read several times to understand God's message.
7. Read for understanding and application. Ask yourself, what is God trying to tell me personally in this passage?
8. Take notes as you read. A special notebook journal and pencil are invaluable tools.
9. Determine to apply what you discover. Don't ask for more light. Ask for more willingness to follow.
10. Expect the Holy Spirit to help you live what you learn. When you request God's power, you will receive it abundantly.

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# A search for spirituality

Marcos  
De Benedicto



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**T**hough the quest for spirituality cannot be considered a modern phenomenon, after the failure of virtually all the “isms” of the past, people today seek for some kind of God to worship. Obviously, spirituality must first be defined before we can hope to deepen our spiritual experience.

## What is spirituality?

Spirituality may be described as the search for the ultimate meaning of life and a quest for finding a pleasant place for the self in the cosmos. In the Christian context, it's the answer to the question, “Who am I?” based on the reality of the One Who said, “I am Who I am.”

Spiritual people center their life on God, not on self. Paradoxically, they live integrated into the real life. Evasion from busyness continues as essential, but just for periods of time.

To be spiritual, in Pauline terms, challenges each person to say again and again, in the power of the Spirit, a grateful “Yes” to God, who expressed a grateful “Yes” to the sinner/believer in Christ Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

True Christian spirituality begins through the door of spiritual rebirth. Although external evidence may result from increased spirituality, growth manifests itself as an internal experience. In a sense, spirituality equates with relationship—the way we relate to God, to others, to ourselves, and to the environment.

How we experience God depends on our personal and corporate history. Complex, dynamic,

progressive, social, and transcendental, spirituality results in religious identity. A one-fits-all expression of spirituality—a wrapped package that one can adopt forever—does not exist. Spirituality, to be real, must be cherished, nourished, and elaborated continuously.

One must be careful, for plurality of spiritualities in the religious market exists today, many of them selfish and syncretistic. For example, a new subculture known as neopaganism has begun to grow. Fluid, diverse, eclectic, highly individualistic, inclusive, and relativistic, mostly formed by urbanites in the 26- to 41-year-old range, this new religious movement reacts, to a great extent, against nominal Christianity.<sup>2</sup> For neopagans, self continues as the most beloved god.

## The root metaphors

Even among the great variety of Christian spiritualities, some are obviously more aligned with the Bible than others. A valid approach involves the study of biblical spirituality through “root metaphors” in order to describe the spiritual experience. I will mention ten of these metaphors. We can combine them to better understand our spirituality and reshape our experiences.<sup>3</sup>

*1. Rescue, redemption, and justification.* Deeply rooted in the New Testament and valued by Protestant Reformers, these metaphors focus on God as the One Who loves us and takes the initiative to save us.

*2. Healing, restoration, and strength.* These metaphors suggest a process of physical or inner renewal. Mystics, Pentecostals, and charismatics emphasize healing and wholeness.

*3. Walking, climbing, journeying, and homing.* Focusing on the theme of pilgrimage, these metaphors show that we have come from God and are returning to Him. Some streams in the Catholic tradition prefer these images, keeping the eyes fixed on sacred shrines. As Beverly Beem and Ginger Hanks Harwood point out, the early Adventists also saw their religious experience as a pilgrimage toward the heavenly city, longing to enjoy eternal communion with God.<sup>4</sup>

*4. War, battle, and combat.* The apostle Paul used these metaphors to describe his inner spiritual struggles. He advised the believers of Ephesus to use the armor of God to fight the invisible forces of evil (Eph. 6:10-18).

*5. Connection and contact.* These metaphors underline the search for spiritual relationship with God. Jesus said that we must live connected with Him as the branch is connected to the vine (John 15).

6. *Contemplation and presence.* These metaphors have two streams. In the Christian tradition, we look to God in order to be changed, while in the Jewish tradition, God looks to us, as we live ethically and responsibly a common life in the world. To walk in the presence of God, according to Arthur Green, best summarizes Jewish spirituality.<sup>5</sup> The believer must walk *after* God, *with* God, and *toward* God.

7. *Imitation and discipleship.* Imitation of models, both human and divine, demonstrated a very important element of religious practice in ancient times. The Gospels may be thought of as biographies written to teach an ethical way of life.

8. *Silence, expectancy, and rest.* These metaphors underscore a disposition of surrendering all to God and waiting for His help.

9. *Thirst and hunger.* Conscious of our insufficiency, we seek for God's supplies. Only He can satiate our souls with the water, the bread, and the wine of life. These metaphors appear, not by chance, in some significant biblical passages in the mouths of the psalmist, Isaiah, Jesus, and the Spirit.

10. *Feast and banquet.* These metaphors speak of the joy that exists in the presence of God. From the Garden of Eden to the New Jerusalem, sensorial delights and spiritual nourishment are not mutually exclusive.

## A minimalist set of tools

Unfortunately, many churches do not promote personal spirituality or offer corporate spiritual formation. Perhaps in reaction to a past of veiled legalism, they act as if spiritual formation were a forbidden practice, or as if spiritual maturity might appear without a deliberate pursuit. However, spiritual formation does not come as an automatic byproduct of justification. Spirituality must be desired, sought, cultivated, and nurtured. It needs focus (or intentionality), organization (or structure), and continuity (or discipline).

There are many "how-tos" and "should-dos" for improving spirituality. Yet, an excess of techniques may be counterproductive. Spiritual disciplines should not become a tyranny. In

my view, the "core of the cores," the truly essential, centers in prayer, study of the Bible, meditation, celebration, and prophetic living.<sup>6</sup> They do not bring spirituality automatically but can be a helpful means of grace in the "hands" of the Spirit.

## Tool 1: Deep dialogue

Essentially, conversation with God at a profound level in prayer includes opening yourself to God so that God may touch you. Dialogue with God only happens through Christ, in the Spirit. By Christ's merits, we can approach God as we are. This fact, already suggested in the Old Testament, links prayer and sacrifice (Gen. 13:4; 26:25). In a sense, to sacrifice (Hebrew *haqrib*, "to draw near") means to bridge a gap. The sacrifice brings forgiveness, reconciliation, and intimacy.

We can pray (1) to request or (2) to commune. Both motives are legitimate. There is nothing wrong with the prayer style "Please, God," especially if made with unselfish purposes. After all, if we do not ask things of God, we will ask for them from false gods. Yet, to change us, prayer must be more than a request based on a list of material items; it must be a personal, intimate, and passionate relationship of love. If a power-releasing symmetry in a picture of a finite being bowed before the Infinite Being exists, there would also be a power-transforming synergy in a picture of a sinner embraced and kissed by the Holy One.

We do not know exactly how the Holy Spirit uses prayer to change us. Perhaps the Spirit seizes a state of openness to refine our thoughts, gives us new insights, draws clear pictures in our minds, presents better ways of life, and impresses on our consciences the character of God. Prayer distances us from sin, makes us more dependent on God, and reinforces our good purposes. Through prayer, we acquire a sense of belonging to a cosmic community, which makes us more accountable to the Sovereign of the universe and more responsible to the world.

Paul especially emphasizes the role of the Spirit in prayer. Through the Son we

become sons. In being sons we receive the Spirit, and in receiving the Spirit we have consciousness of our sonship and cry "Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:14-16). The Spirit leads us to see God as a loving Father. In prayer, especially when the horizon seems foggy, our discourse and the utterance of the Spirit are mixed. Prayer as an eschatological discourse helps us, through the Spirit, to pulsate at the rhythm of God.

## Tool 2: Study of the sacred classics

In the matter of "soup" for the mind/soul, there exists a variety of sources. Today one interested in learning from the classics of Christian spirituality has access to most of them. These works may be truly insightful. However, we must be aware of two things. First, most works are "dated," in the sense that they were written in a different cultural context. If they succeeded in their time, it is because they had significance to their target audience. Yet, their potential audience may be small today, because their presuppositions, descriptions, and prescriptions do not fit our needs and tastes. Second, they are a secondary source, in the sense that the Bible is the primary source.

The Bible stays as the inexhaustible well of Christian spirituality. Whenever the Spirit of God reveals, the content provides a richness that feeds many generations without being exhausted. In the store-room of the Bible we find old and new treasures (Matt. 13:52). Its insights are actualized and amplified, not surpassed or nullified.

There are many Bible-study methods. Whichever we choose, we should consider adopting (1) a wholistic approach, applying the whole of ourselves to the study of the Bible, and the whole of the Bible to ourselves; (2) an existential approach, avoiding a mere aesthetic and unengaged study; (3) a spiritual approach, studying the Bible with prayer and asking for the illumination of the Spirit; (4) a soteriological approach, knowing that Christ is at the center of the Bible.

When we go beyond the letter, meet real personalities, and glimpse new pos-



sibilities, the Bible indicates the identity of God's people, draws the framework for a holy community, and nourishes our selves. As we appropriate its promises, we live as if God were speaking directly to us. Factual knowledge of the Bible alone does not cause spiritual development, although it can help to shape one's attitude. The Spirit must penetrate our inner world and use biblical truth to change us.

### Tool 3: Balance of the self

Meditation can be divided into two broad categories: (1) meditation to empty the self and reach the zero (cosmic nothing) and (2) meditation to fill the mind and unite with the One (God). Christian meditation fits into the second one; it has content and leads to God. Biblical meditation is characterized not so much by our emptying but by the ecstasy of God's emptying, in order to include us in His circle of love.

Meditation, it is believed, has spiritual and therapeutic advantages. It adjusts our vision, sharpens our focus, gives us perspective (the ability of seeing the relationship of the parts to the whole or the big picture), and elevates our dreams. During this time we hear God's voice, discern God's will, decide to obey God's Word, and increase our love.

There are different approaches to meditation. A few possibilities are:

1. *Meditation as contemplation.* In the mystical traditions, the meditator searches for a direct experience of unity with the divine, in which the self disappears in the cosmic sea, so to say, and brings a sensation of ecstasy. A better biblical strategy calls for us to look to Christ, with the help of the Spirit, in order to gain awareness of God's self and ways.

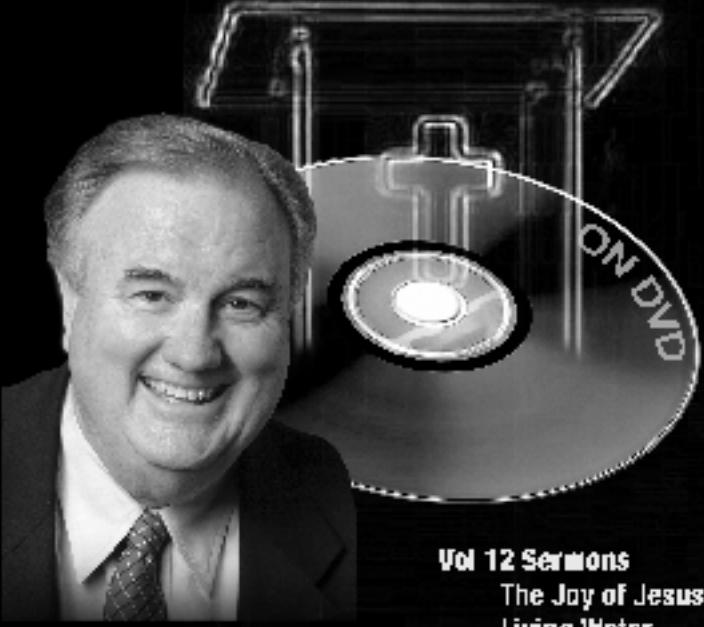
2. *Meditation as insight-search.* The study and appropriation of the biblical content results in finding new insights. For biblical authors, meditation is focusing on God's Word, work, and world. This helps us to evaluate ourselves in relation to God and the universe. We see ourselves as in an infinite mirror.

3. *Meditation as imagination.* Through imagination, we can fly beyond the stars, visit other worlds, and visualize new universes. Imagination is not

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incompatible with God, for the Bible authors filled their writings with metaphors, parables, images, visions, and dreams. In meditative imagination we can visualize fighting spiritual battles in various circumstances. As we face and overcome them, we virtually create a new behavioral pattern.

4. *Meditation as solitude.* People generally fear loneliness, but solitude can bring blessing. The Spirit seems to work better in a context of silence and solitude. Great characters of the Bible who faced demanding tasks were at times prepared in the desert. We can mention Moses (Exod. 3), Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-18), Jesus (Matt. 4:1-11), and Paul (Gal. 1:15-18). The desert became a metaphor of quietness and quietude before God.

5. *Meditation as relaxation.* Meditation can be used as a technique for relaxation. The human body manifests a state of calmness whenever the mind concentrates for some time.

#### Tool 4: Creative celebration

With solitude basic for spiritual growth, the collective and celebrative environment is no less important. When we meet our peers of spiritual pilgrimage, there appears a critical energy that pushes us toward a common goal. The Christian community is vital to us.

The usual meeting place for Christians is the church. The church forms the context for conversion, incorporates the God-seekers, creates a new identity for us, presents us a new value system, and reorients our personal story. In the church, memory and imagination come alive.

The Sabbath, as a sacred time and foretaste of eternity, is the best opportunity to promote this kind of experience. Free from the pressure and hurry, we open our minds to the cleansing presence of the Spirit.

#### Tool 5: Prophetic living

Biblical prophets have impacted and blessed the world by their disturbing and comforting voices. Prophetic living has become part of spirituality. All are invited to manifest the attitude and the spirit of the prophets. The prophetic living

consolidates our experience with God and others.

How do we define a prophet, beyond the idea of a spokesperson totally faithful to God? A prophet travels between two covenantal spheres—divine and human. Attuned to the sighs of heaven and groans of earth, open to divine and human feelings, the prophet responds emotionally to God's pathos. "In contrast to the Stoic sage who is a *homo apathetikos*, the prophet may be characterized as a *homo sympathetikos*," says Abraham Heschel.<sup>7</sup>

Prophets have a special sensitivity to evil. Always aware of injustice, they do not fear to criticize the corruptions and perversities of the dominant ideologies. From Moses to Amos, from John the Baptist to the apostle John, every true prophet has challenged the status quo.

Prophets hate commonplace, but love common sense. For the prophet, whose concerns center with reality more than with originality, good is good, evil is evil; truth is truth, a lie is a lie; justice is justice, injustice is injustice (Isa. 5:20). Many prophetic shouts are calls to abandon twisted ways of thinking and behaving and to recover common sense. In the prophetic realm, it is imperative to dream, but always leaning on reality; namely, the ultimate reality (God).

Prophets have a cosmic ecological conscience. They respect and protect the natural world. According to a prophetic voice, God takes ecology so seriously that he will judge "those who destroy the earth" (Rev. 11:18). More significantly, the nature also will share the future glorious cosmic restoration. Accordingly, the prophet has a simple, healthy, and even frugal lifestyle.

Prophets, aware of God's action in history, can read off what God is doing in the world—or at least can read better than the rest of people. Prophetic eyes see deeper, far away, and far better—hence the prophet's tendency to attribute human deeds to God. In line with God, prophets not only speak but also act. What they do has always been much more important than what they say. Prophets live in advance and to

advance the realities of God's kingdom. Always in a stand-by mode, the prophet is ready for God.

#### Logical priority

As a way of conclusion, we need to remember that a tension exists between being and doing, intimacy and action, prayer and compassion, the inward and the outward, the individual and the corporate dimensions of spirituality. The tension is real, but these dimensions are not mutually exclusive. The Bible establishes a logical priority/sequence: vertical/horizontal, being/doing.

Each person of the twenty-first century who seeks a more profound spiritual experience needs to be balanced like Jesus. Christ focused on important things and gave to every thing its correct value. He passionately loved the people and, above all, experienced directly the loving fatherhood of God in a new way and to an unprecedented degree.

All tools mentioned here, as well as other possible tools, are just tools. A tool does not work by itself—it needs an external power to manage it. This power, in the spiritual sphere known as the Holy Spirit, makes God real, immediate, and craveable. ■

- 1 R. P. Meye, "Spirituality," Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, ed. *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 906.
- 2 Danny L. Jorgensen and Scott E. Russell, "American Neopaganism: The Participants' Social Identity," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38 (1999): 325-338.
- 3 Here I partly follow Bradley P. Holt, *Thirsty for God: A Brief History of Christian Spirituality* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1993), 124-126.
- 4 Beverly Beem and Ginger Hanks Harwood, "Pilgrims and Strangers: Adventist Spirituality, 1850-1863," *Spectrum* 31 (2003): 67-75.
- 5 Arthur Green, "Introduction," Arthur Green, ed. in *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible Through the Middle Ages* (New York: Crossroad, 1986), xiii-xiv.
- 6 See Marcos C. De Benedicto, "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Enabling Believers for Ministry: An Adventist Perspective" (D.Min. dissertation, Andrews University, 2004), 206-208.
- 7 Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets*, two volumes in one (Peabody: Prince, 1999), 2:88, italics in original.

# God is in control: Daniel's message of hope

Joel N. Musvosvi

As one of the most fascinating books of the Bible, Daniel contains colorful, dramatic, and suspenseful narrations that have appealed to all generations of Bible students. The author portrays the great conflict between God and Satan, revealing its outworkings in a religious-political setting that spans history from the Babylonian exile to the Second Advent with a perspective larger than its own historical setting.

The faith of the four Hebrew youths speaks to God's children in times of crisis. The story of Daniel in the lions' den inspires faith. Nebuchadnezzar's wanderings and rescue challenge one's lifestyle and faith. Tremper Longman III's observation fits well: "The first six chapters [of Daniel] are deceptively simple stories of faith under pressure."<sup>1</sup> But beneath the simple narratives lies a profound message.

The last six chapters, steeped in symbolism, have beckoned the imagination of Bible students throughout history. Over the rich prophetic symbolisms, battles have been waged.

Young Daniel, taken into exile during the first siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylon in 605 B.C.,<sup>2</sup> was chosen, along with three others, for special training for royal service in Babylon. Daniel rose to be a prominent and distinguished statesman.

## The nature of biblical apocalyptic

The book of Daniel plays an important role in the development of "apocalyptic literature." D. S.

Russell considers the book "the first, and greatest, of all Jewish apocalyptic writings,"<sup>3</sup> although P. D. Hanson, on the basis of his analysis of Isaiah, argues for the presence of apocalyptic style in books written earlier than Daniel.<sup>4</sup>

The word "apocalyptic" comes from the Greek *apokalypsis* found in the opening verse of Revelation, and became a fitting name for the literature that shares certain special features. So while Daniel was the first biblical book to develop an extensive usage of apocalyptic features, Revelation was the first to give a name to such a genre of literature. As Tremper Longman III observes, "Apocalyptic . . . communicates an impending sense of doom, a feeling that existence might come to an end at any moment."<sup>5</sup> D. S. Russell defines apocalyptic as "essentially a literature of the oppressed who saw no hope for the nation simply in terms of politics or on the plane of human history. The battle they were fighting was on a spiritual level; it was to be understood not in terms of politics and economics, but rather in terms of spiritual powers in high places. And so they were compelled to look beyond history to the dramatic and miraculous intervention of God."<sup>6</sup>

## The crisis setting of Daniel

The book of Daniel was written in the setting of God's people in crisis in Babylon. Jerusalem lay in ruins, and Judah was devastated. With the temple destroyed, why would one want to live? How could God's people find a sense of their identity? Daniel's book sought to bring comfort and encouragement to those in such distress. Not written primarily as a theological treatise for trained biblical specialists, Daniel seeks to speak first and foremost to the heart, not the head. And while we may tussle over and wrestle with the symbolic complexity of the document, we must not miss or overlook the simple heartwarming divine message of confident assurance and hope.

As noted, the book of Daniel divides itself into two major sections. The first section covers chapters 1 to 6; the second, chapters 7 to 12. Since the first section covers mostly historical events that had already happened by the time the writer recorded them, we may refer to it as the historical section. And since the second half comprises prophetic predictions that were yet to be fulfilled, we may refer to that section as the prophetic, or eschatological, section.

There are some distinct contrasts between the two sections. The grouping of events in the two sections does not seem to be by chance or random placement of events. In fact, it is clear that the author has not merely followed a chronological order of



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events. The overriding guide seems to have been stylistic and structural. The author placed in the historical section a group of events that shared certain common features, while those with a different set of features were set in the prophetic section. Once the author has established the two basic sections and grouped his material in accordance with the stylistic categorization, he then follows in each section a chronological sequence.

### Sequence of events in Daniel

Daniel 5 provides an important date-line for understanding the time sequencing of the events in the book. Chapter 5 records the fall of Babylon during the days of its last king, Belshazzar, and the entry of the Medo-Persian Empire. The feast of Belshazzar recorded in chapter 5 took place in the tenth year of his reign. Keeping this dateline in mind, we notice that a number of events recorded in the prophetic section of the book (chapters 7–12) actually took place before the events recorded in chapter 5. It is noteworthy that the vision recorded in chapter 7 occurred in the first year of the reign of Belshazzar (Dan. 7:1), before the fall of Babylon, an event recorded in chapter 5. The vision of chapter 8 occurred in the third year of the reign of Belshazzar (Dan. 8:1), again before the fall of Babylon. The events of chapter 9 occurred in the first year of the reign of Darius (Dan. 9:1-2), before the episode of Daniel in the lions’

den as recorded in chapter 6. Therefore, the grouping of materials in the book has been determined by considerations other than mere chronology. And we must discover those other considerations as we seek to uncover the central plot and message of the book.

### Contrasting characteristics of the two sections

Different characteristics set apart the two sections of the book. The table below outlines some of these structural and stylistic differences between the two sections.

Chapters 1–6	Chapters 7–12
1. Written largely in Aramaic	1. Written largely in Hebrew
2. Written in plain style	2. Written in symbolic style
3. Contains short, complete stories	3. Contains long, unfolding prophecies
4. Drama cast in a local setting	4. Drama cast in a cosmic setting
5. Crisis affects small remnant	5. Crisis faces cosmic remnant
6. The remnant’s adversary is local	6. The remnant’s adversary is cosmic
7. Drama records past events	7. Drama portrays future events
8. A realized divine vindication	8. A promised divine vindication

Daniel, a master at interpreting dreams and scripts in the historical segment, experiences constant baffling by his own dreams in the eschatological section of the book. Thus the man who always stands by perplexed dreamers to bring them understanding in chapters 1 through 6 seems consistently perplexed by his own dreams and needing Gabriel, the angelic interpreter, to bring him understanding.

Interestingly, the first six chapters portray a series of crises that have already

been resolved at the time of writing. The reader does not puzzle over what the outcome of the story will be; each story is complete. So, as we read the story we watch as God enters and directs the crises of His people to a victorious climax.

By contrast, the last six chapters portray a series of unfolding megadramas. As one vision leads into the next, the sense of bewilderment intensifies. After the vision of chapter 7 Daniel says, “I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit within *my* body, and the visions of my head troubled me” (Dan. 7:15). In response to the vision of chapter 8 Daniel became afraid and fell on his face, and eventually fell asleep as the angel tried to help him understand (8:16–18). Later Daniel fainted and became sick as a result of the vision experience (8:27). Chapter 10 records Daniel mourning and fasting for three weeks as he contemplated the visions. In the ending of chapter 12 Daniel says, “Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, ‘My lord, what *shall* be the end of these *things*?’ And he said, ‘Go *your way*, Daniel, for the words *are* closed up and sealed till the time of the end’ ” (12:8, 9). With no sign of relief expressed after the second section, readers must await God’s final action.

### The unity of the two sections

Because of the different characteristics of the two sections of the book, some

scholars have argued for a dual authorship of the book, suggesting that the historical section (chapters 1-6) was written by one author, and the prophetic section (chapters 7–12) by another author. However, some interesting interlocks bind these two sections together and thus favor a single author. For instance, the language of the two sections is intertwined. Daniel 1:1–2:4a and 8:1–12, 13 is written in Hebrew, while Daniel 2:4b–7:28 is written in Aramaic. We can easily notice that the language



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break-off point differs from the structural or stylistic sectional break-off point. The historical section begins in Hebrew and ends in Aramaic, while the eschatological section begins in Aramaic and ends in Hebrew. Why would the author of the historical section use two languages for his document, and why would the author of the eschatological section also use the same two languages in reverse order for his document? And why would these two authors have the same central character as Daniel? I believe that the two-author solution does not deal with the fundamental issues of the book. I believe the solution is to be found in the historical realities and theological design of the author. Ferch has demonstrated several uniting features that link the two parts. For example, God's sovereignty and the arrogance of the enemy coupled with the passivism of the saints argue in favor of the unity of the book.<sup>8</sup>

### The dramatic crises of the first section

Noted previously, the historical section of the book consists of six short episodes, each of which is complete in itself. Each story involves a series of events that eventually precipitate a crisis involving the

remnant—God's faithful ones. Daniel 1 introduces the crisis of lifestyle for the people of God: Will they compromise with Babylon in matters of what to eat and what to drink, or will they uphold God's Word? Daniel 2 presents the crisis of knowledge and understanding. In the land of Babylon knowledge and understanding were highly regarded. Will human knowledge and understanding prevail, or will the remnant honor God by turning to Him and pointing to Him as the source of knowledge and wisdom? Daniel 3 portrays the crisis of worship. Will the remnant worship the image of Babylon, or will they worship and serve God? Daniel 4 presents the crisis of sovereignty. Will Nebuchadnezzar uphold his own ability to think, to do and to be, or will he acknowledge the sovereign God? Daniel 5 relates to the crisis of insight and understanding. And Daniel 6 climaxes with the crisis of integrity. Each crisis demands a solution greater than available human resources. Each crisis brings into focus the faithful remnant, focusing attention on their God. God resolves each crisis in favor of the saints. Thus the sovereignty of God continues as the controlling and organizing theme of this book.

### Daniel's theological design

We now examine the theological structure and design of the book. Daniel stands as a beacon light in a world enshrouded in ever-deepening darkness and controlled by mindless despots and inhuman coalitions of evil. Ellen G. White states: "In the annals of human history, the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as if dependent on the will and prowess of man . . . But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, above, behind, and through all the play and counterplay of human interest and power and passions, the agencies of the All-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will."<sup>9</sup>

The first six chapters of Daniel showcase six microcosmic dramas through which divine intervention and the vindication of the saints stand as an open testimony to the power of the God of heaven. First, they serve to introduce the prophet, Daniel, and authenticate his prophetic integrity. By presenting a series of stories in which Daniel demonstrates his personal integrity, spiritual commitment, and ability to understand mysteries, his prophetic credentials are established.<sup>10</sup>

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Second, these first six chapters serve to prepare the reader for the crises of the last six chapters. Only those who have read with understanding and discernment chapters 1 through 6 can live with confidence through chapters 7 through 12. Each of the first six chapters asks, “Can we count on God in the great issues of life?” The certainty of the answer prepares the way theologically and spiritually for the larger unfolding dramas of the last six chapters. The end-time reader who must face the uncertainties of living under the threat of cosmic enemies will have six previews of God’s faithfulness to the remnant. We have a basis for assurance and confidence when we move into the larger end-time crises.

### The significance and relevance of Daniel

Apocalyptic times often bring puzzle-ment about the suffering of the God-fearing.

The saints wonder why they are permitted to suffer; they are perplexed why God seems so distant from their pressing situation. These are not new questions in modern times—the saints in Babylon were faced with the same issues.

One of the functions of biblical apocalyptic literature is to remind the remnant of their unique and special place in God’s plan. Surrounded by the enemy, the remnant may be in danger of relegating themselves, their function, and their significance to the role of insignificant, minor players of a local drama. But the apocalyptic reminds them that they play key roles in a cosmic drama.

From its inception, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has seen itself as an apocalyptic movement, immersed in the thought patterns and worldview of an apocalyptic end-time message. We find much that affirms our identity in the apocalyptic books of the Bible. This core of self-understanding characterizes both our message and mission. When this self-understanding is removed from focus, Adventism begins to suffer from an identity crisis that threatens our unique place and destiny. Sometimes we feel that to identify ourselves as the remnant is to make claims to being better than others. But, in fact, the remnant has a prophetic

role—a role that cannot be laid aside in the name of humility or modesty.

In biblical terms, being the remnant points to God’s grace, not to human achievement. The biblical concept of the remnant points to God’s doing: “Unless the Lord of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah” (Isa. 1:9). It is the Lord who establishes a remnant. As Romans 11:5, 6 expresses it, “Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then *it is* no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if *it is* of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.” And so a correct understanding of the concept of the remnant of grace does not lead to pride. It leads to humility.

The remnant in Daniel demonstrate this attitude of humble and trusting dependence on God. They do not make a parade of their status, but humbly ascribe glory and honor to the Most High. Daniel speaks to the church today, challenging the remnant to live triumphantly through God’s grace. ■

\* Scripture quotations from the New King James Version.

- 1 Tremper Longman III, *The NIV Application Commentary: Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), p. 19.
- 2 While some scholars today favor a late date for the authorship of Daniel, Arthur J. Ferch, among others, has argued convincingly for an early (exilic) date. Arthur J. Ferch, *Daniel on Solid Ground*, (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1988), 33–36. See also William H. Shea, *The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier: Daniel 1-7* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1996), 33–49; Gerhard F. Hasel, in *Symposium on Daniel* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1986), 84–164; Desmond Ford, *Daniel* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1978), 30–44.
- 3 D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964), 16.
- 4 P. D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975).
- 5 Longman III, 177.
- 6 Russell, 17, 18.
- 7 Scripture quotations from the New King James Version.
- 8 Ferch, 24.
- 9 Ellen G. White, *The Story of Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1917), 499, 500.
- 10 See Longman III, 23.



## Tobacco Conference

**Silver Spring, Maryland, United States**—On December 12 and 13, 2005, health professionals and others interested in the topic of smoking cessation met at the Seventh-day Adventist Church world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA, to review current stop-smoking programs. Additionally they studied ways the church could be more involved in helping people to stop smoking. For more than 40 years the Seventh-day Adventist Church has promoted smoking prevention and cessation throughout the world.

The group also made plans for an **Adventist Tobacco Conference** that will be held July 14–17, 2006, in Washington, DC. “We invite those interested in providing stop-smoking programs to attend this conference,” stated DeWitt S. Williams, director of health ministries for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. Williams pointed out that smoking is still one of the most serious health problems and that many smokers need help with the addiction. For additional information on the conference, visit <http://www.nadhealthministries.org>.> Just prior to this conference will be the 13th World Conference on Tobacco, also in Washington.

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## Annual Pastoral and Evangelism Council

**Oakwood College, Huntsville, Alabama** is the location of this yearly conference. The most recent conference, held December 4–7, 2005, brought more than seven hundred participants from United States and Canada. Additionally there were representatives from the United Kingdom, Caribbean Nations, Africa, Central American countries, Australia, and the Philippines.

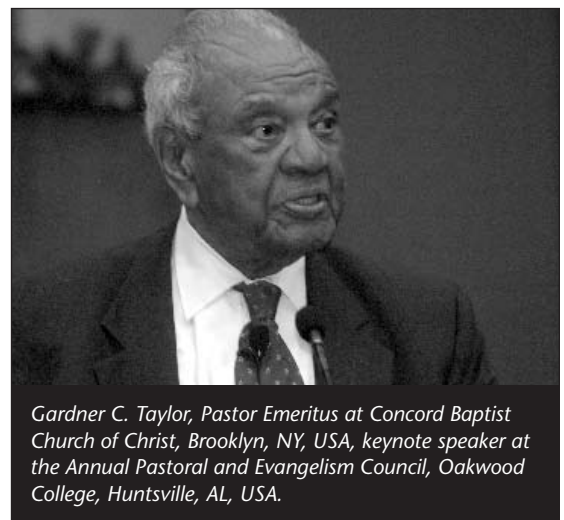
The keynote speaker was **Dr. Gardner C. Taylor**, pastor emeritus, Concord Baptist Church of Christ, Brooklyn, New York. C. E. Bradford, long time friend and former president of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, introduced the speaker. Taylor is no stranger to the readers of *Ministry*. He was one of the speakers for the first *Ministry* Professional Growth Seminar that was broadcast live by satellite.

Some of the presenters for the 2005 evangelism council were Barry Black, chaplain of the US Senate and first Adventist to serve in that role; veteran evangelist Kenneth Cox; Benjamin P. Browne, the new president of the South Central Conference of Seventh-day Adventists; and Hyveth Williams, senior pastor of the Loma Linda Campus Hill Church. Each day seminars were held on various topics of interest to ministers.

Steve Cassimy, senior pastor of the Grand Concourse Church, The Bronx, New York and a former conference speaker was one of the many in attendance. He stated, “This event has inspired my ministry over the past 20 years. God has used this Council to nurture gospel workers in their ministry.”

According to Dr. Mervyn A. Warren, provost of Oakwood College and chairman of the Annual Pastoral and Evangelism Council, “For well over two decades now without skipping a single year, continuing education at the Oakwood College location has been provided for evangelists, pastors, Bible instructors, and other religious workers.”

During the conference Dr. Delbert W. Baker, president of Oakwood College, United States, also announced that the Bradford-Cleveland Institute has been renamed the Bradford-Cleveland-Brooks Institute for Continuing Education in Min-



*Gardner C. Taylor, Pastor Emeritus at Concord Baptist Church of Christ, Brooklyn, NY, USA, keynote speaker at the Annual Pastoral and Evangelism Council, Oakwood College, Huntsville, AL, USA.*

istry. This continuing education institute honors three veteran Adventist ministers, **C. E. Bradford, E. E. Cleveland, and C. D. Brooks.**

The next conference will be held on the campus of Oakwood College, December 3–6, 2006.





## BOOK REVIEW

**Feed My Sheep,** H. M. S. Richards, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, MD 21740, copyright © 2005 by the Harold M. S. and Mable E. Richards 1980 Trust. Foreword by Dwight Nelson. Paperback, 335 pages, \$17.99.

*Feed My Sheep* is the published version of a series of lectures on preaching presented by H. M. S. Richards in Takoma Park, Maryland, in 1957. Richards (1894–1985) founded the *Voice of Prophecy* radio broadcast and achieved worldwide recognition as a preacher and evangelist.

In this series of nine lectures, Richards shares his experience, insights, and convictions regarding pastoral ministry.

Each lecture reads like an intimate counseling conversation between a veteran pastor and his cherished intern. The book deals with bedrock issues of ministry as reflected in lecture titles including, “What Is Preaching?” “The Preacher Himself,” “Feed My Sheep,” “Reading to Preach,” and “The Tongue of Fire.”

Richards, a master of preaching, declares that “true gospel preaching is never present where man talks about anything except the Holy Scriptures, the Word of God.” It follows from this that “preaching is the most important function of the Christian church and of the Advent message.” Every pastor, according to Richards, can improve his preaching by getting “onto the affirmative side” and preaching “in the light of the cross and the resurrection.”

Every presentation in the series is flavored with anecdotes from the author’s

career in ministry. Richards read extensively. His acquaintance with literature, philosophy, poetry, and personalities and, above all, his depth in understanding Scripture, demonstrate why he was one of those preachers to whom one *must* listen.

Although the lectures contained in this book were delivered almost 50 years ago, they have not lost their significance. The author knows the life of a minister, its challenges, traps, and rewards. The reprinting of *Feed My Sheep* makes available to a new generation of ministers a resource both simple and substantive, provocative and profound, on the life and ministry of a pastor/evangelist. ■

—Lowell Cooper, vice president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

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never mind a malicious witness. Satan can be perfectly honest and free of malice when presenting the sins of the human race before the heavenly Tribunal. He may be “relentless,” to use Pastor Rice’s description, but relentlessness is hardly a synonym for malice.

Even if Satan were to resort to malicious witnessing, he would be declared to have committed a procedural error. As God has made clear in a statement Seventh-day Adventists usually associate with our belief in the state of the dead, “The soul who sins shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4). The sins of A cannot be used to convict B. Only the death of Jesus, by virtue of His being both Priest and Sacrifice, could release one from guilt.

Satan could complain about the unfairness of it all he wants, but in the end he would end up sounding like the day laborers in the parable of the Husbandman. The workers were never cheated out of the wage they agreed to receive, so why should they have an attitude about how the Husbandman chooses to pay his employees? God never made a secret of this: “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” (Exodus 33:19, Romans 9:14-15). Against such expansive grace the most malicious witness stands no chance.

—Daniel J. Drazen, Editor, *Seventh-day Adventist Periodical Index*, email

(George Rice responds: *It was not and is not my intention to get into all of the detail. I intended to present a simple concept, the Law of Malicious Witness in Deuteronomy, that may very well give us insight that might be worthy of consideration as to how God will deal with Satan and the redeemed in the judgment.*)

## More on the bishop, husband of one wife

I offer for your consideration the following follow-up response to Nancy Vyhmeister’s article, “The bishop, husband of one wife: What does it mean?” [October 2005].

As a suggested addition to the article by pastor Liebelt’s letter to the editor in the December *Ministry*, I offer the following for your consideration:

Dr. Knight states in his book *A Search for Identity*, p. 39, that “Miller’s teachings would eventually form the theological foundation of Seventh-day Adventism.” He is referring here to William Miller of the Second Great Awakening period of the first half of the 19th Century. Dr. Knight presented to us that William Miller developed “a well-thought-out set of rules for interpreting Scripture. His rules divide into two sections. The first five rules deal with general principles of interpretation for the entire Bible, while the last nine deal more specifically with interpreting the prophetic writings of the Bible” (p. 41). Further on down the page I note the statement regarding Miller’s rules of prophetic interpretation that interpretation should come out of the Bible, rather than being read into it. E.G. White states in *The Great Controversy*, p. 320, that angels guided Miller’s understanding of the Scriptures.

One of Miller’s rules of prophetic interpretation according to Dr. Knight is that if a statement of Scripture makes sense on its own, then it is to be taken literally. If we follow this appropriate line of interpretation with the text of 1 Timothy 3:2 and allow that which makes sense on its own to be allowed to stand on its own as the literal meaning of the text, then it is quite clear that the “Bishop” that Paul referred to would be a male, the husband of one female, period. Let us not read into the Bible our own preferred interpretation, but let us rather let the Bible interpret itself. This would be likewise in reference to pastors.

Further, let us not take women down from the most important place in the church structure, that of rearing the children to love the Lord. “The mother is God’s agent to Christianize the family” *Adventist Home*, p. 235.

—David Tripp, pastor, Fort Dodge district, Iowa, USA

## Whatever happened?

I am sad! Whatever has happened to my hero Clifford Goldstein (“The inexplicable unexplained: another look at evil,” November 2005)?

Goldstein makes a good case that evil and sin cannot be explained to humankind. It was difficult to understand

for sinless inhabitants of other worlds and to the angels at least until the crucifixion of Christ. But he says that his thinking has changed and that evil will never be explained which infers that God cannot explain it either. He goes further by writing, “Does this position, then, imply that God doesn’t have an explanation for all evil? Yes.” He then tries to support this by his inexplicable reasoning “If something is, by definition, inexplicable, then it can’t be explained, period. If God can explain it, then it’s not inexplicable.” Goldstein must be equating human reasoning with God’s. What a sad and confused position to have. He is making a gigantic leap to transfer this inexplicableness to God, with no foundation except his own reasoning

It is sad to see where Goldstein might be going with this logic. He is weaving Ellen White in and out with other theologians and using her writings selectively to prove his theory.

—L. Emery Karst, DDS, Salem, Oregon, USA

## Herbert Douglass’ article grabbed me!

Herbert Douglass’ [December 2005] “God’s blueprint—a secure, loving universe,” grabbed me because he writes about the great controversy which provides a mix of attention-catching elements and issues such as “creation, Eden, sovereignty, choice, freedom, human nature, death, law, obedience, distrust, seduction, disobedience, shame, estrangement, exile, slander, divine, love, distortions, deceptions, rebellion, spins, lies, disasters, incarnation, divine and human natures of Christ, loyalty, compliance, angels, both good and bad, dragons, evil empires, pride, ambition, duplicity, exposes, kingdoms, violence, fidelity, justice, judgment, vindication, reconciliation, atonement, redemption, restoration, eternal life, peace, victory, songs, to name a few and, oh yes, the big fight!” “War in heaven!” (Enough grist for the sermon mill?)

Today’s culture is awash with “cunningly devised fables,” to use Peter’s description, that will, to use Jesus’ words, “if possible, deceive the very elect.”

—Oliver Jacques, Fallbrook, California, USA

# Believers behaving badly

Charles Bradford sums it up succinctly and poetically:

*To live above with the saints in love,  
For me that will be glory!  
But to live below with the saints I know,  
That's another story!*

Beware any disconnect between belief and behavior. The path is wide, and the trap is easy to assume that good goals justify either suspect means or mean suspects.

Curious as it may sound to orthodox-loving minds, Jesus bases judgment not on our doctrines but on our behavior toward Him and the least of His brothers. That's right! While Jesus loves and upholds the truth—Himself being truth personified—He demands that truth be spoken in love. Should we fail this test, then any truth telling becomes merely clanging brass. Our worst behavior can occur at the very moment we mistakenly believe we are performing our best service. For example:

**Abuse of platform.** At last year's General Conference Session some individuals, while standing at the microphones, railed as they urged evicting miscreants from membership for offenses ranging from tobacco usage to divorce. Although the letter of law might permit such punishments, their opinions were recorded and published in such manner that brought more harm than good.

One individual, who had recently begun attending worship services in a distant location, read these "opinions" in the printed minutes and concluded that such harshness was the church's official position, rather than just the free expression of a delegate with a bad attitude.

Of course, no harm was intended by the publishers of record, but clearly these diatribes, expressed with much less charity than Christ's love demands, were

JAMES A. CRESS



more than a new believer was able to bear and discouraged a "little one" at the very moment he should have been protected and nurtured, not lambasted.

Jesus uses the strongest warnings possible against those who would discourage "little ones" or new believers (Luke 17:1, 2). In fact, on the very topic of tobacco usage as reason for church action, I'm reminded of good counsel on how to deal with errant members.

*"The course pursued toward Doctor Osborn has been all wrong.*

*"Had this man been handled judiciously he would have been a blessing to the church. He has used tobacco to a greater or less degree, but this habit was not as offensive in the sight of God as the defects in the character of those who might judge him, for God weighs the motives . . .*

*"His human nature could not bear the unintelligent, unreasonable, unchristian, course pursued by men and women who had more zeal than knowledge. God has been displeased with, and dishonored by, them . . .*

*"Some have taken a position that those who use tobacco should be dealt with and turned out of the church. In all of our experience for many years not a case of this kind has thus been treated by us. We have borne with them and labored with and prayed with them for years, and if after a time, they did not reform they became lax in other*

*things, and causes of a grievous character occurred which required an action on the part of the church. But then the responsibility was not assumed by merely the resident elder, the deacon, or any church member, but the church waited in patience for help, for wise counselors, and then moved with the greatest caution.*

*These hasty movements in such cases tend to ruin a church. It shows a self-sufficient, self-important, bigoted spirit which if indulged will ruin any church . . .*

*"Doctor Osborn has not pursued that meek and Christian course which the Bible requires, but those who have condemned him have pursued a course far more objectionable in the sight of God than that pursued by him, and they are answerable for their influence . . .*

*"I was shown that the same injudicious treatment has been exercised toward others. Some precious souls that could not justify the unchristian course pursued toward the doctor were crowded until they have separated from the church, and others have been cut off. Such a spirit has taken possession of those who have ever carried things by storm that Satan, instead of the Spirit of Christ, has triumphed. Some of those who have been deprived of the fellowship of the church have been more worthy of a place in the church than those by whom they were cut off. God calls upon these to repent, and learn of Christ in the spirit of meekness, of self-denial, and love." (Ellen White Manuscript Releases, Vol. 12, pp. 285-287).*

Of course, other examples abound of believers behaving badly that we will later discuss: abuse of knowledge, abuse of position, abuse of advantage, abuse of legality, and abuse of influence.

For the moment, however, let's strive to live in peace with the saints below if we expect ever to live with them in love above.

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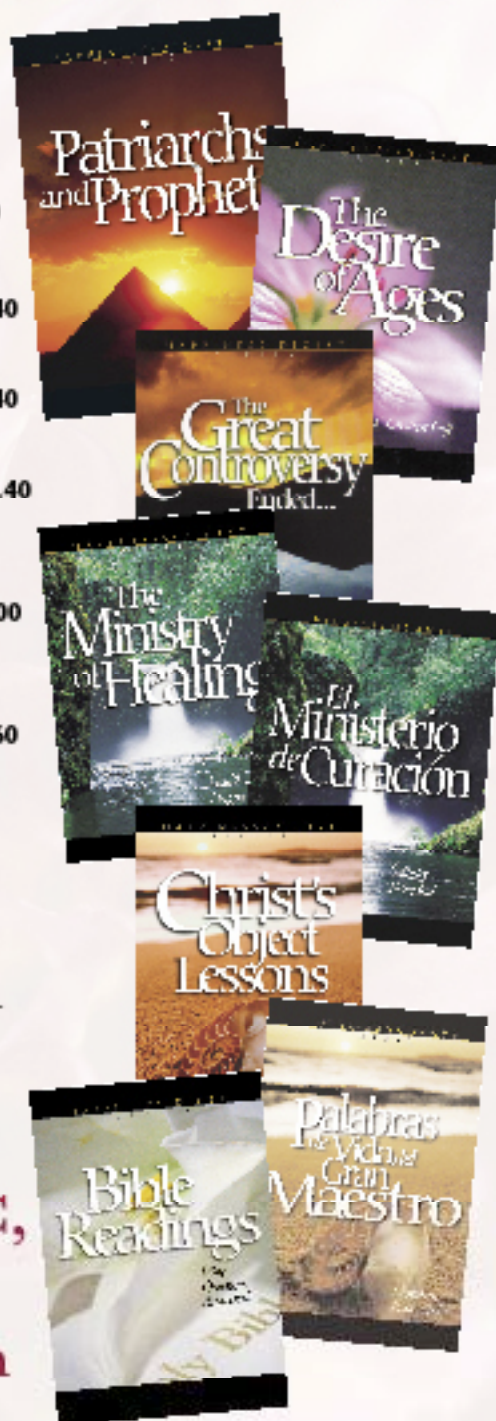
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Explore the *Unlocking the Signs* dynamic website and find a host church near you at: [www.unlockthesigns.com](http://www.unlockthesigns.com) or find a church near you by calling: **1-888-96-SIGNS**

*Plan to bring your friends!*

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